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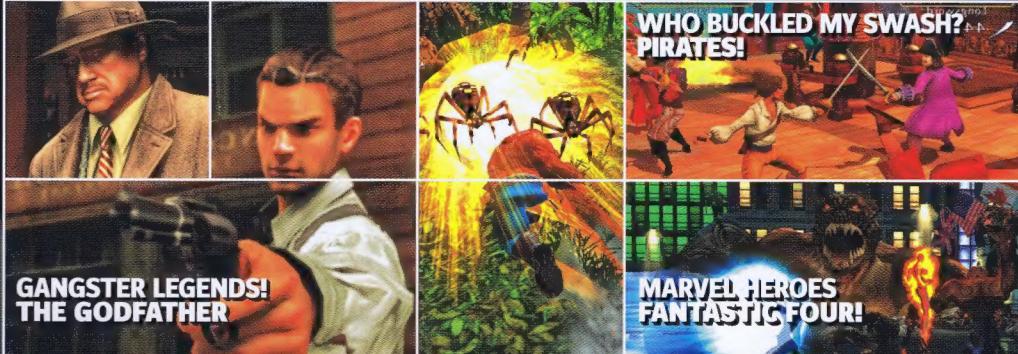
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RAINBOW SIX LOCKDOWN
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8 EXCLUSIVE PLAYABLE DEMOS!

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CHAOS THEORY
- UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2
- PARIAH
- TIMESPLITTERS
- AND LOADS MORE!

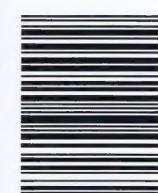
No disc? Ask your newsagent!

HEADLINE NEWS: THE FATHER OF FINAL FANTASY SIGNS UP, PANDEMIC TALKS ALIENS, PIRATES AHOY, FULLY MASHED...



DERWENT HOWARD

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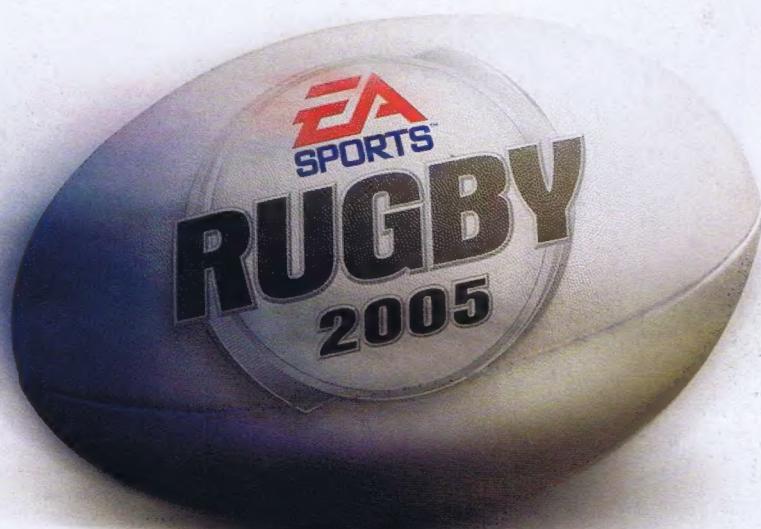
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GENERAL

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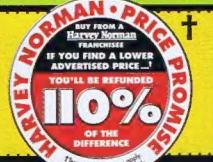
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The welcome mat:



Smile!

IS IT TOO EARLY to make a call on the Game of the Year? Because I think we've got ourselves a serious contender with *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory*. As you'll see in our exclusive review (page 058), the third chapter in Ubisoft's *Splinter Cell* series has been an absolute joy to play this month; and it's a joy we're sharing with you on our demo disc with a full playable mission.

But that's not all you'll find on our disc. There must be some kind of rare alignment of the moon and the stars, because there is a total of seven of this month's standout titles that are playable on the disc. *Chaos Theory*, I've already mentioned; there's also *Unreal Championship 2*, *Timesplitters: Future Perfect*, *Star Wars Republic Commando*, *SVC Chaos*, *SNK Vs Capcom* and (to an admittedly lesser degree) *Tak 2* and *Constantine*.

I'm sure some readers would've loved for us to go one better and provide a playable demo of *Playboy: The Mansion*, but personally I'm somewhat relieved that our poor receptionist will be spared the inevitable complaints and abuse it would've attracted. Just last week, a concerned mother called up my office to complain about our preview of *Playboy: The Mansion* in Issue 37, and demanded that I immediately cancel the game's development.

As much as I didn't mind listening to her moral outrage, I suspect she didn't understand that we don't make any games here.

So, before any more concerned mothers start calling us or arrange protest marches outside our office, please be aware that we're probably not the best people to complain to. We just reflect public opinion and report on what's available. Part of me thinks a game that simulates magazine production sounds a little too much like work, but the small mountain of emails and letters I've received that read "So... when's that Playboy game coming out?" suggests there is a market for it. Either way, our review on page 072 will hopefully reflect the objectivity we apply to every game on the market.

Happy gaming!

KEVIN CHEUNG
EDITOR, OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN
XBOX MAGAZINE

ZOMBIE PACK GIVEAWAY!

FANCY A LITTLE SPOOF with the undead? With thanks to Universal Pictures, the Official Australian Xbox Magazine would like to give you the chance to win one of five *Shaun of the Dead* prize packs, each

containing a copy of the DVD and the CD soundtrack. To be in the running to win, just go to our website at www.derwenthoward.com.au, click on the OAXM section and enter! Entries close on May 17.



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XBOX MAGAZINE

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» THE BEST XBOX NEWS AND REVIEWS

PLAYABLE

» THE EXCLUSIVE SOURCE FOR PLAYABLE XBOX DEMOS

FIRST

» NEWS, PREVIEWS & REVIEWS BEFORE ANYONE ELSE

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU

» THE OFFICIAL Australian Xbox Magazine is written by a group of experienced gamers who've spent their lives playing games. We believe that games are the most exciting form of entertainment there is. This magazine will reflect that at all times.

» WE BELIEVE THAT the arrival of Xbox represents one of the most important developments in video games. Xbox will not 'kill' the PS2 or GameCube - and as gamers we wouldn't want it to. However, the power and technological innovation offered by Microsoft's new machine will result in better games and more choice for Xbox owners.

» BEING THE OFFICIAL Australian Xbox Magazine means that we are in the best position to give impartial, honest review scores. We don't do any deals to get access to finished games. As a result, we're in the best possible position to give you what you deserve - balanced, objective and accurate reviews on which to base your buying decisions.

» MICROSOFT HAS no access to, or influence over, the Official Australian Xbox Magazine. The company's involvement ends once it has made available to us materials we need for the magazine, and it will only read our reviews when you do.

» HOWEVER, BECAUSE we are the official magazine, we have unprecedented access to the newest Xbox games in development and the people making them. Our coverage of forthcoming titles will take you closer than ever before to the most exciting new games. We will talk to the developers and publish the best new screenshots before anyone else.

» OUR OFFICIAL STATUS allows us to get closer to every Xbox story, rooting out the truth from the rumours and speculation. Because we can go directly to the people involved, you can be assured that every story in the magazine will be accurate and truthful.

» THE OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN XBOX MAGAZINE is part of a huge network of games journalists across the globe, ready to visit games developers wherever they are and report exclusively for the Official Xbox Magazine World Network.

» WE BELIEVE that the readers of the Official Australian Xbox Magazine are one of our most important assets. While it's our job to provide you with the demos, news, previews and reviews you need, we want to be a place where your opinions and expertise can be shared with the new Xbox community.

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On the Disc...



WELCOME TO Issue 39's Playable Game Disc, the only source available for playable demos, movies, downloads and more for your Xbox.

Playable demo discs just don't come any better than this (famous last words, we realise) - but this month is truly exceptional. For starters, we've got the first fully playable level of *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory* to accompany our exclusive Aussie review, both of them just happening to coincide with the game's release. And our favourite line to use in situations like this is "Don't believe our review? Play the demo and see for yourself, then". We hope you'll be as impressed as we were.

Next off the mark is a playable demo of *Unreal Championship 2: The Liandri Conflict*. Midway performed a master stroke in picking up this title and you'll just love how fast and frantic it is.

The rest of the games on offer are nothing to thumb your nose at. There's *Timesplitters Future Perfect* and the exceptional *Star Wars Republic Commando* for first-person shooter fans, *SVC Chaos* for the small band of 2D fighting fans out there and platform antics with *Tak 2*, obviously for the kids.

Also, be sure to scan through the usual round of demo movies and game-saves, which can be selected from the menu tree. Catch you next month!



↑ The Xbox controller is your gateway to the Official Australian Xbox Magazine Game Disc. Use the directional pad or left thumbstick to highlight the menus in the right-hand window and press the A button to select. The B button returns you to the previous menu and the White button zooms in for an extreme close-up of the screen.

Splinter Cell Chaos Theory

Reviewed: Page 058

Players: 1

Score: 9.8



↑ "...please don't fart, please don't fart, ple..."



↑ "See, this was Kano's original finishing move!"



Unreal Championship 2

Reviewed: Page 064

Players: 1

Players: 2-4 S.Link

Score: 9.2

Live: 2-4 players

BEHOLD, FPS FANS! *Unreal Championship 2* is a chance to leap off the treadmill of 'aim and fire' shooters and make fraggering an artform. This demo includes three playable characters (Anubis, Szalon and Lauren) and three awesome battlegrounds. But the ultimate knockout blow is the chance to play with up to four players via System Link or Xbox Live!

The most important evolution is that you're no longer bound to a first-person perspective. Pressing the White button or bringing out a melee weapon switches you into the third-person view. Wielding your melee weapon offers several advantages. Holding both triggers activates an energy shield to counter weapons fire. Tapping the Left trigger just as a foe's rocket is about to hit you will also deflect it back into their faces, which is extremely satisfying!

Clicking the Right stick while an enemy is in view activates the auto lock-on. This makes it easier to hack and slash away without worrying about the camera. It'll also lock-on your charge attacks,

performed mid-jump. Either hold the Right trigger for a few seconds or press B (if you have three bars of adrenaline) to execute a deadly pouncing attack.

Adrenaline is vital because it lets you perform special moves. Press X once for the basic moves and twice for extra-special ones. Each character has unique adrenaline moves but you'll need two full blue meters to execute some of them. We love Anubis's Warrior Spirit, Lauren's Wraith state and Szalon's Predator vision.



↑ Get the U-damage power-up for easier kills.





Constantine

Reviewed: Page 085 | Score: 7.5
Players: 1

IN THIS DEMO, you're taking a brief trip to hell to locate a precious artefact. At the start, you must step into the puddle of water and follow the button combo to cast the transportation spell, then press the Right trigger immediately to draw your primary weapon, the Witch's Curse.

The demons you encounter are sneaky little creeps. If you hear one approaching from behind, click the Left thumbstick for a quick 180° turn. You might also want to switch to True Sight mode so you can spot enemies from a distance.



↑ "A Shambler? Here? What game is this?"

If a creature does get close enough to pounce, quickly tap the A button to shake it off. Later on in the mission, you'll recover the crucifier, which fires the nails used in crucifixions. Make sure you retrieve any missed shots from the walls and floors.

- MOVE / (CLICK) TURN
- LOOK / (CLICK) ZOOM
- ZOOM / UNEQUIP
- MELEE / ACTION
- DRINK FLASK
- TRUE SIGHT
- CAST SPELL
- SECONDARY WEAPON
- FIRE
- TOGGLE SECONDARY WEAPON
- TOGGLE PRIMARY WEAPON

Star Wars: Republic Commando

Reviewed: Pg 080 | Score: 9.0
Players: 1

TAKE ON THE role of Delta Lead, a clone trooper fighting for the Republic. In this mission, Delta Squad managed to infiltrate a Trade Federation Capital Ship. With the droid force fully alerted, you must rendezvous with the rest of Delta Squad and blast a path through to the bridge.

Command Delta Squad to breach doors, set up sniper positions and heal themselves at medical stations. Point your crosshair over key areas until a context-sensitive icon appears in blue. Now press A to issue the command or press A again to cancel it.



↑ "Argh! There are Kiwi voices in my head!"

- MOVE
- LOOK
- NOT USED
- USE / COMMAND
- MELEE
- RELOAD
- JUMP
- THROW DEDONATOR
- FIRE
- CYCLE DEDONATORS
- CYCLE VISOR MODE

TimeSplitters: Future Perfect

Reviewed: Page 074 | Score: 9.5
Players: 1



↑ Kids, this wouldn't work in real life...

IT'S THE YEAR 2401 and humankind is on the brink of extinction. Cortez is trying to save humankind by building a time machine, but war-ravaged Earth is a bit short of runways. While looking for a place to land, your ship is blasted out of the skies, forcing you to complete your treacherous journey on foot.

Somehow, the TimeSplitters have mutated into an even more terrifyingly durable form - they're incredibly agile and can turn invisible at will! They've also recruited mercs to boost their numbers.

Kill as many of your foes as possible and pick up their dropped weapons. There's a great assault rifle to collect and you can also recover several crates of plasma grenades. Later on, one of your buddies will provide you with a sniper rifle. One head-shot, one kill. Sweet.

- MOVE / (CLICK) CROUCH
- LOOK
- ZOOM / TOGGLE WEAPON
- ACTIVATE
- MELEE
- MANUAL RELOAD
- NOT USED
- GRENADE
- FIRE
- NOT USED
- TOGGLE GRENADES

Game Saves

PLAY:MORE is determined to crack open every Xbox title and bring you the hottest downloadable saves. This issue...

Crash Twinsanity

Four saves at various points throughout the game. Skip right ahead to the final boss if you think you're tough enough.

Ford Racing 3

Drive all 55 cars without having to unlock any of them! All 11 race types are also unlocked and ready to be torn apart.

Kingdom Under Fire: The Crusaders

Eight massive saves for all four characters. This allows you to skip to the final mission for Gerald and Lucretia and the second missions for Kendal and Reginer.

Shark Tale

All 25 chapters are open and completed with some Bonus and Elite missions completed too.

Spyro: A Hero's Tale

Start on the final realm with all breaths unlocked. We've also collected stacks of eggs, dark gems and light gems!

How To...

Download your Game Saves

SAVES CAN BE found in the Game Saves and Extra Content menus. Highlight one and press the A button to download it. If the save is greyed out and can't be selected, you already have a save of this type on your Xbox hard disk. Simply go into the memory screen on your Xbox Dashboard, delete the save and, the next time you load the game disc, the option will reappear in white.

PROBLEMS WITH YOUR DISC?

If your Official Australian Xbox Magazine demo DVD is faulty, send it back to us at *Disc Returns, Official Australian Xbox Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction NSW 1355*, and we'll replace the disc without delay. Don't forget to include your postal address so we can send it back to you!



Area 51

Reviewed: Coming soon Score: TBA
 Players: 1

AS SPECIAL FORCES units go, you could have a tougher-sounding name than HAZMAT (hazardous materials division). Never mind. Playing as squad leader Ethan Cole, you've been called to investigate a viral outbreak inside Area 51.

Although things are quiet at first, you soon find yourself outnumbered by a horde of rampaging aliens. If these guys look familiar, that's because they were once your fellow HAZMAT agents, now infected with an alien microbe.

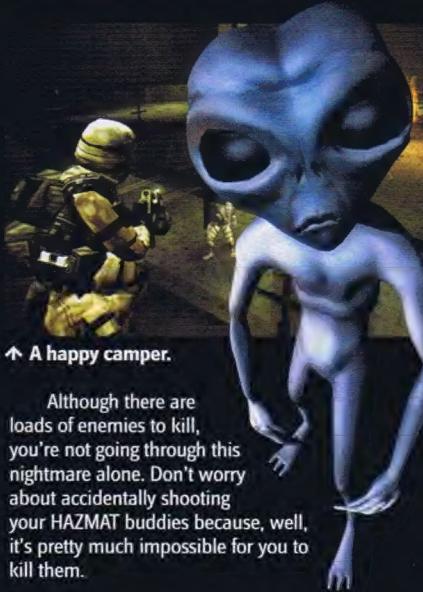
Fortunately, you're armed to the teeth. The shotgun is great for close-range slaughter while the assault rifle has a much better rate of fire and reload.



↑ Metal... legs... can't... move...

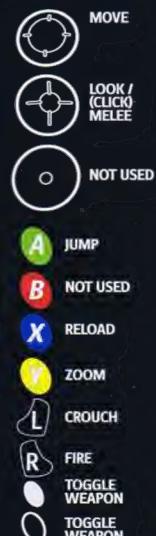
Try using your sniper rifle in the large open areas to hold back the tide of enemies. The magnum is quite powerful but the poor rate of fire makes it a last resort.

Make sure you root around the opening area for a second assault rifle. Pick it up and you'll be able to dual wield as long as the ammo lasts or until you change weapon.



↑ A happy camper.

Although there are loads of enemies to kill, you're not going through this nightmare alone. Don't worry about accidentally shooting your HAZMAT buddies because, well, it's pretty much impossible for you to kill them.



Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams

Reviewed: Page 084 Score: 6.6
 Players: 1

WHEN YOU'RE a voodoo priest, there's nothing more important than Juju! It makes the world turn, the beetles crawl and the rivers flow. Tak is still a novice, but he's learning new Juju spells all the time and this trial mission is no exception.

Having been sent on a quest to recover the Staff of Dreams, you've run into an obstacle that only a Tiki demon can remove. To summon him, you'll need to recover the Tiki totem and place it in the Juju shrine.



You're not alone on this quest, though. The half-human flea called Jibola is here to help, offering lots of useful advice. Jibola can also be thrown like a projectile at some of the animals in Tak's world. Chuck him onto a squirrel and you can either bite it or send it to sleep.

It's possible to throw your mighty staff around like a boomerang, too. This is useful for dealing with venus flytraps, but it will only temporarily stun the wood imps.

Later on in the level, you'll learn the Juju run spell. Simply hold the Left trigger while running or swimming and your speed will be doubled, letting you zip around the screen much quicker.



SNK Vs Capcom: SVC Chaos

Reviewed: Page 090 Score: 7.0
 Players: 1-2

WHETHER YOU'RE a Ryo Sakazaki (martial arts master) or a Dan Hibiki (kung-fu funkey), this is the most advanced, and scariest, game to come out of the SNK/Capcom stable for some time.

This demo includes four playable fighters - Terry "Camp Trucker" Bogard, Chun "Thunder Thighs" Li, Ryu and Mai "Bounce Bounce Baby" Shiranui. Each has a unique set of moves and a few super-specials that can be executed once your groove bar is high enough. The bar increases when you land a hit on your opponent and is depleted when you perform a special.



↑ Animated sprites. God bless 'em.

As usual for SNK fighters, it's possible to buffer normal and special attacks into a combo. For example, Ryu can perform a low sweep straight into a fireball with no pause in between.

SVC Chaos' way of mixing up the basic flow of attack and defence is the Guard Cancel. After an opponent has performed a move, he'll have to pause for a fraction of a second to recover. If you blocked him, tap towards twice or press R to attack while he's vulnerable. It's an easy way to avoid being stunned while you block and regain the initiative, and using them effectively is the mark of a skilled player.

Try playing the game Arcade mode, too. You'll face new CPU opponents like Choi Bounce.

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OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN XBOX MAGAZINE

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Exclusive Australian review of the game to topple all other espionage games!



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More superheroes than you can shake a stick at!



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Possibly the only gangster game that could beat GTA.



036 COMMANDOS STRIKE FORCE

Exclusive interview with the makers of the game.



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Go behind the scenes of this great new racing sim!

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Puffy shirts and handlebar moustaches are back in fashion with Pirates!



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Strap yourselves in for one of the best deathmatch games we've ever played!



072 PLAYBOY: THE MANSION

Dive into the sex-filled world of Hugh Hefner in this simulation of magazine production!



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Another quality first-person shooter that won't disappoint its fans.



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You lead a squad of Kiwis against the Separatists. Lock and load, people!



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- AND LOADS MORE!

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First Look

World-exclusive scoops of the newest Xbox games in development

FANTASTIC FOUR

A kiss from Jessica Alba with every game. Not.

THE GODFATHER

Welcome to the Family. You'll never leave.

P014

P016



OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN
XBOX MAGAZINE
EXCLUSIVE
SCREENSHOTS

↑ Combine powers and the Fantastic Four will be invincible.

Fantastic Four

Bendy, see-thru, flaming, clobbering madness heading here

Dev: Seven Studios	Pub: Activision
Release: Summer 2005	Live: None
Players: 1-2	

MARVEL'S ONGOING mission to bring to life its full range of comic characters has yet to reach the likes of Matter-Eater Lad or The Walrus, but on the way, via the likes of Spidey and X-Men, nestle the Fantastic Four. Due for release in the summer, and timed neatly to coincide with the film's release, *Fantastic Four* will let us explore the strange world of our daring foursome after they're zapped in a cosmic accident out there in the ether.

All four characters will be playable throughout the game, and be completely interchangeable, which will make for a bizarre, nay 'fantastic', slice of gaming. We can combine the likes of Mr Fantastic's super-stretchy limbs with The Thing's clobberin' power to effectively create a human slingshot, just as we can use Invisible Girl's telekinetic powers to freeze an enemy, and allow the Human Torch (who the hell thought up these names?!) to then frazzle them. This - even more so than perhaps *Spider-Man* or *X-Men* - is going to be the game with the most 'kerpow' for your pound.

Our main nemesis will be the metal-headed Doctor Doom, who, as you can see from these exclusive screens, will be unleashing more than just chaos on the world. Giant enemies, scenery-chewing monsters and psychotic robots will all be part of the deal when it comes to our world-saving

duties. But don't worry about playing the game and ruining the movie; apparently the game will be set over a greater time span than the film, stretching it (Mr Fantastic style) into a whole new plot.

With all these destructive powers, it's good to hear that the environment has been designed to be fully destructible. Walls can be clobbered down if a door is locked; huge chunks of masonry can be fashioned into weapons by The Thing; and the Human Torch can set areas alight and flush out enemies. *Fantastic Four* will encourage us to play with a mate because, like the Four themselves, we'll be more successful in a team. There's no word on whether the game will be Live yet, but a two-player co-op has been announced at least.

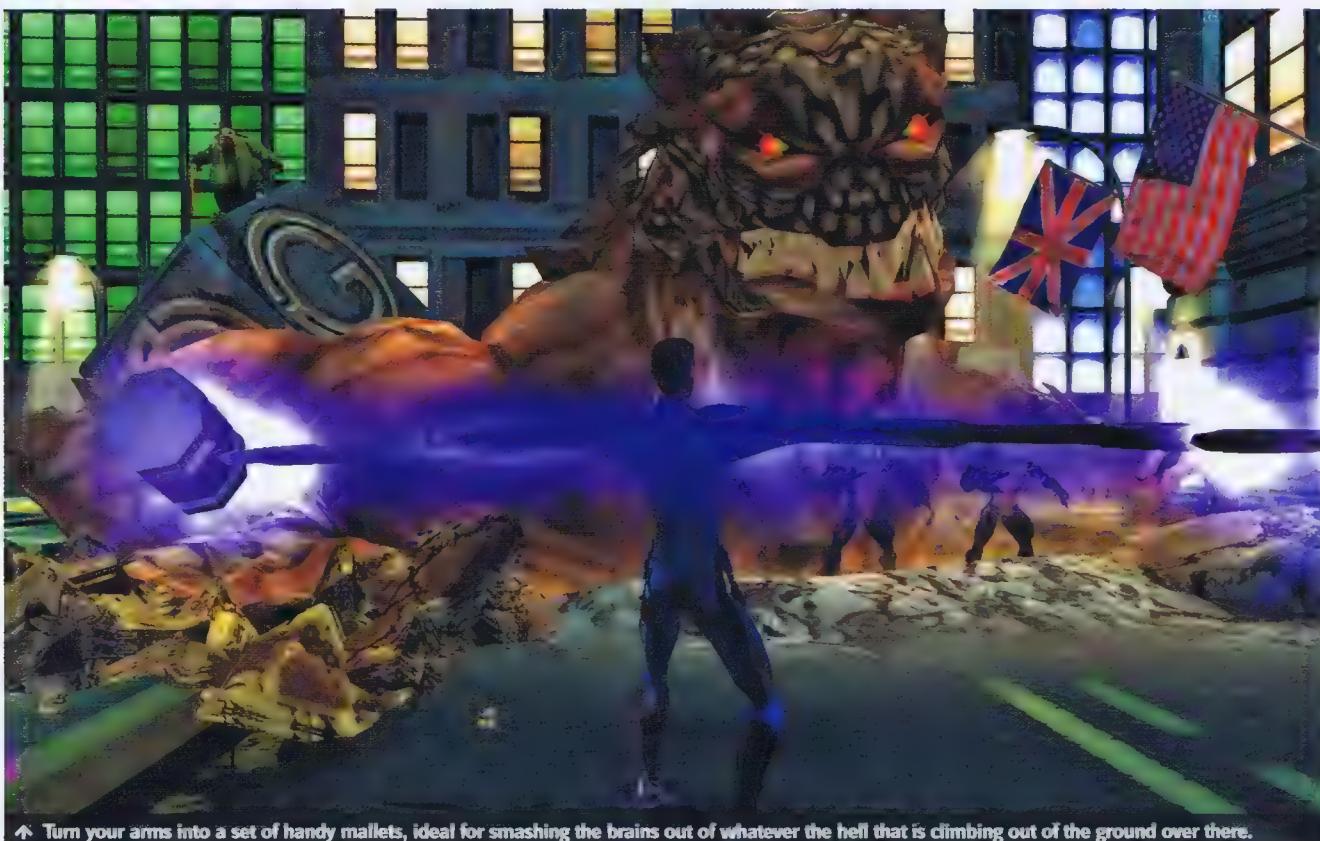
Other features that have come creeping out of Activision's HQ also suggest we'll be able to turn enemies against each other. Using Mr Fantastic's swollen brain power, we'll confuse our foes and make them turn on each other. We'll also be able to stretch our arms into the shape of weapons, T2 style, such as hammers and clubs. There'll be plenty of stealth to sit alongside the smashing too, as Invisible Girl will have to sneak into highly guarded areas to hack Doom's computer and security systems. Just as the Human Torch will be able to shield players in a curtain of flame. Whatever the Fantastic Four can do in the comic series, it seems developer Seven Studios is eager to implement in the game. Only the summer will tell whether we get to see Mr Fantastic bend himself into the shape of a balloon poodle, though.



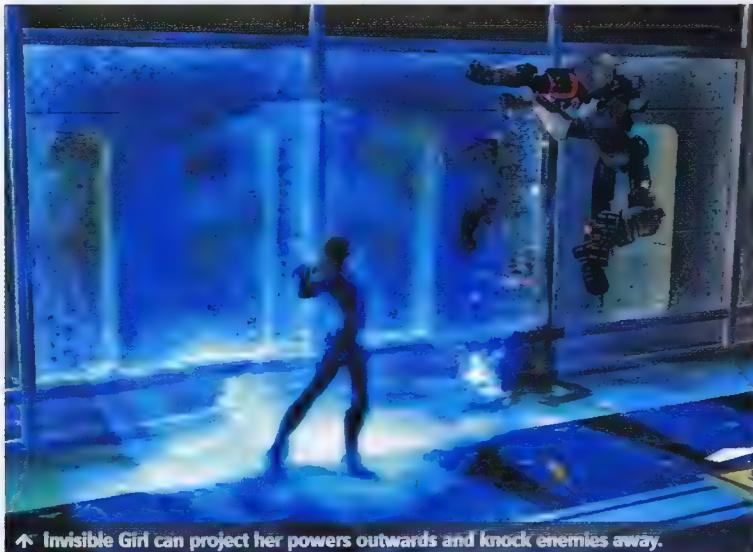
↑ "Don't make me hit you with this toothbrush"



↑ Giant spiders will be no match for a man made of rock.



↑ Turn your arms into a set of handy mallets, ideal for smashing the brains out of whatever the hell that is climbing out of the ground over there.



↑ Invisible Girl can project her powers outwards and knock enemies away.



↑ The Human Torch will be able to rise off the ground, ideal for angled attacks.

Anatomy of Attack

Who's this guy? On the shoulders of a monster? Mmm... intriguing.

We've no idea what the hell this is but we guess some of that 'teamwork' is the only way to bring it down.

While one team member distracts the beast, the Human Torch goes in for the kill.

We'll be able to protect our team-mates with our own powers. Here The Torch has given Invisible Girl a flame wall.

Even The Thing will get clobbered from time to time to keep us on our toes.

Invisible Girl will generate force fields for herself and team-mates to ward off attacks.



Bonus info

WORM EATER

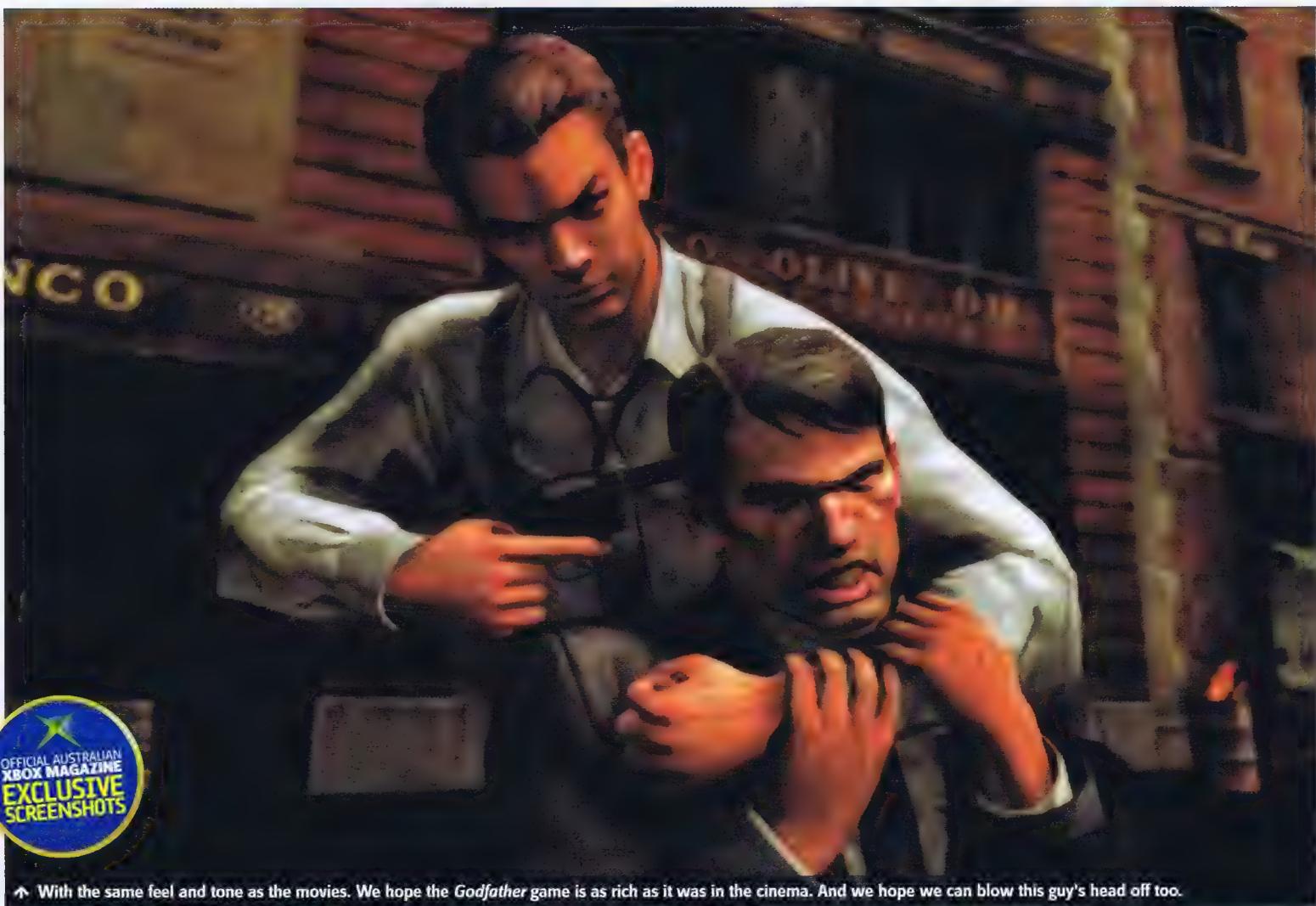
In the very first *Fantastic Four* comic, the team fought their first nemesis, Mole Man. We don't know whether that's him crawling out of the ground in the screens but the smart money says he's not going to appear.

TOO MUCH VODKA

The Russian equivalent of the *Fantastic Four* are a strange bunch. Led by a guy called the Red Ghost, his three superhuman friends aren't human at all. They're highly trained super-apes. No wonder Communism collapsed.

HANDBAG SMASH

For a short while during the comics, The Thing went off and starred in his own storylines. This meant the Four were Three, until they were joined by the big green shopper known as She-Hulk. Shame we won't see her in the game!



With the same feel and tone as the movies. We hope the *Godfather* game is as rich as it was in the cinema. And we hope we can blow this guy's head off too.

The Godfather

And we're not talking silver Christening spoons...

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dev: EA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pub: EA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Release: Spring '05	<input type="checkbox"/> Live: None
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Players: 1	

NO, WE'RE not travelling down the oft-trodden path of 'EA is going to make us an offer we can't refuse' pummage. For this is not so much about EA, but about being able to live out the most iconic gangster film the world has ever seen. *Godfather* is coming to Xbox, so if you see oranges anywhere nearby, dive under a table right now and stay there for a good half hour.

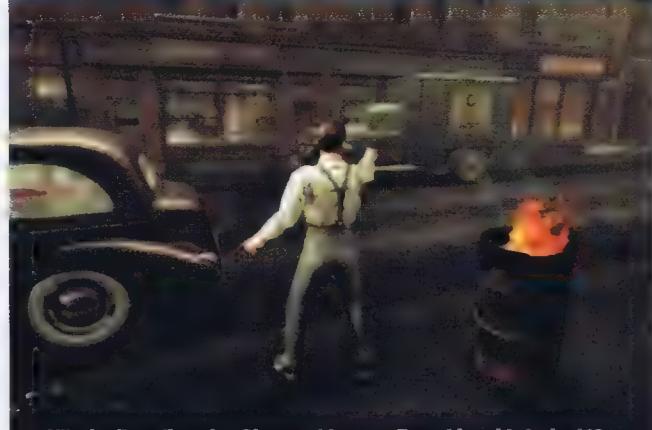
Set in New York during the '40s and '50s, we'll be playing one of Don Corleone's distant relatives who, under the orders of Cottonwool-Mouth himself, must take control of Little Italy. He's a little cocksure, a little too ambitious, and a little bit 'Tommy Vercetti' as well.

Played very much as a *GTA*-style free-roamer, *Godfather* won't be quite so forgiving of our mistakes. You annoy the Don, there are going to be serious repercussions. People we'll encounter won't just be your usual dumb NPCs. If you're going to kick an innocent bystander to death à la *Vice City*, this time people will know who you are, and remember your actions. Bad hits could result in revenge attacks, which could lead to Little Italy becoming the battleground of a fierce turf war. No, we're going to have to think like a gangster and enter into a little 'forced persuasion' on those we

deem 'dispensable'. And just remember, the Family comes before everything else. Do a Fredo and we'll soon know about it.

Simple threats are all well and good to scare the Family's enemies, but how about getting the butcher on the payroll? The cleaver certainly has the right persuasive personality we'll need. And what about the local barber? Not only will he supply gossip and provide a dapper slick-back job to impress the molls, but with a cut-throat razor pressed to his windpipe, the average customer might well be willing to help us in our needs too. With local people on our side, we could be looking at eventual immunity from the police and, hopefully, complete control over Little Italy. How we actually go about getting people on-side has yet to be revealed but we suspect the main screenshot (above) might be a hint.

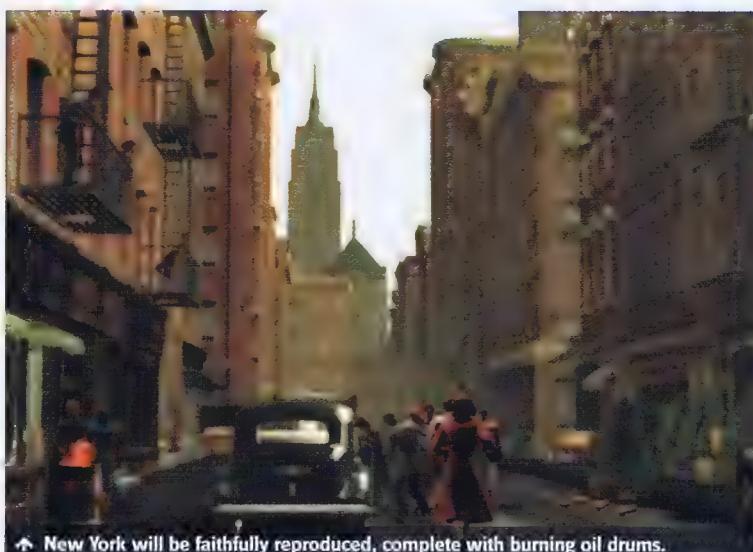
Interestingly, this will only be EA's second step into the more mature-rated game (*Def Jam Fight For New York* - Issue 34, 8.9 - before that), and with similar titles such as the afore mentioned *GTA* having already courted mature ratings, it will be interesting to see in which area EA chooses to push the title. Rather than 'doing a *Godfather III*', we hope it sticks to the source material that made the first two films such iconic movies. We need epic storytelling, compelling characterisation, and a game that's a lot more than a *GTA* done with a film licence. All on a thin and crispy overbaked base, of course.



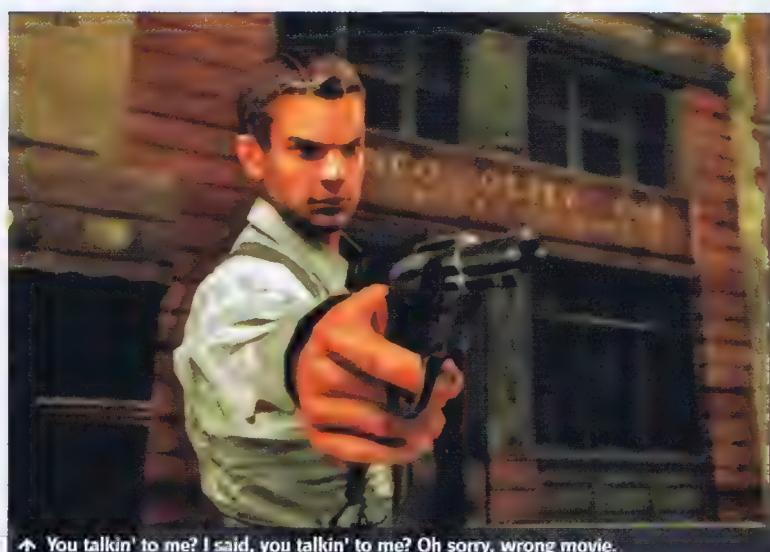
Hijack olive oil trucks. Okay, so it's not a Ferrari but this is the '40s.



The Don himself. Mess with Vito, swim with the fishes. Capiche?



→ New York will be faithfully reproduced, complete with burning oil drums.

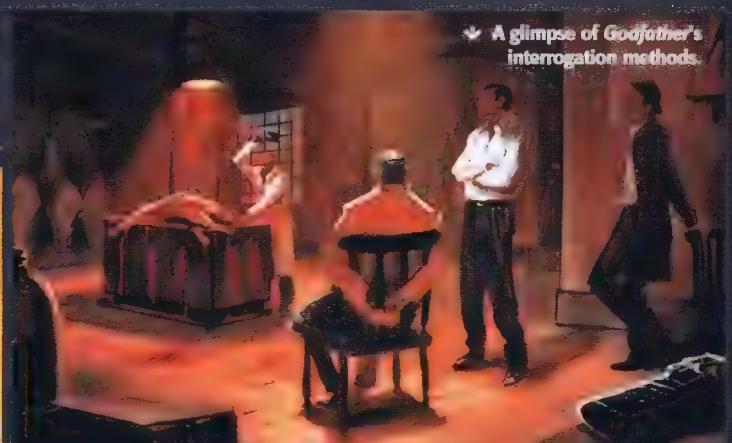


→ You talkin' to me? I said, you talkin' to me? Oh sorry, wrong movie.

Short Back And Sides?

Getting the Corleones nailed

 THESE EXCLUSIVE pieces of artwork show the lengths we'll be able to go to in order to intimidate our enemies. Not only are the barber and butcher nasty-looking characters, but check out the way the butcher will happily go about his work as a victim sits strapped to a chair. Failing that, there's always a trusty gun in the foreground. We've got a funny feeling we're going to like this game...



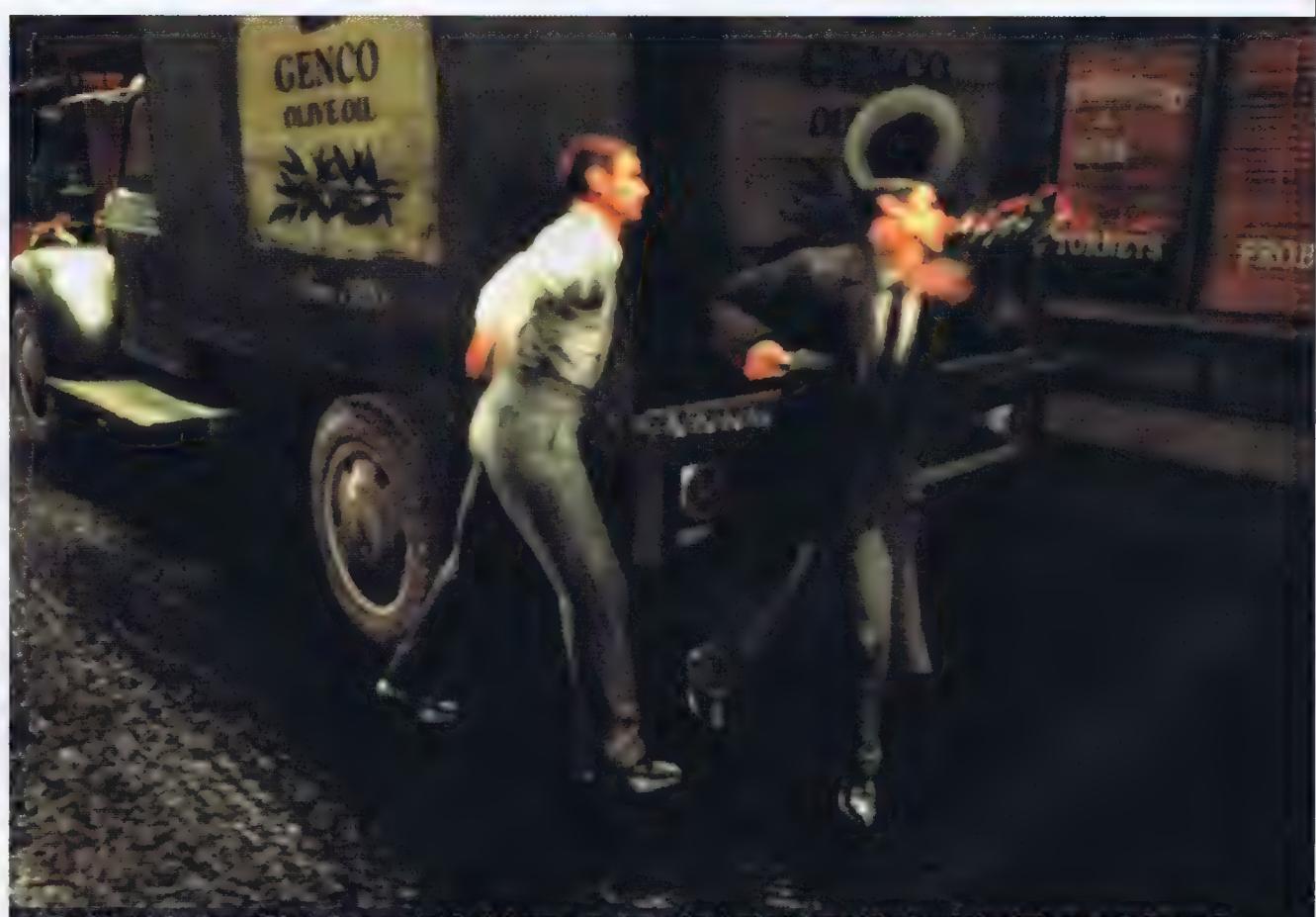
★ A glimpse of Godfather's interrogation methods.

Glossy info

DOING THE DON
In Mafia society there are eight levels a mafioso needs to climb through in order to become The Don. We're not sure whether this game will have us threatening Don Vito's rule yet though.

GENCO GOODNESS
A lot of the game will revolve around the Genco Olive Oil business. This is the front Vito set up in *Godfather Part II* to run his illegal shenanigans.

MEAN STREETS
No news just yet on the vehicles we'll get to drive during the game. As well as these pictures of delivery trucks, we hope to get a bit of action from the Don's cars, limos, and, perhaps, pushbikes. Actually, scratch that, the pushbikes idea sucks.

★ The GTA-style beatings will be in the game, but *Godfather* goes one better: drool and spit bursts. Wonder whether brain matter is the same?

Incoming

→ All the essential news, exclusive previews and latest screenshots from the wonderful world of Xbox.

2019 HOME GROWN GAMES

Pandemic talks up its next big alien title.

2019 UBISOFT GETS SPORTY

Remember when Microsoft closed its sports division?

2020 WITHOUT WARNING

Splinter Cell meets Die Hard in this new action game.

2021 FULLY MASHED

The follow-up to one of last year's best multiplayer games.

2024 REVENGE OF THE SITH

More new pics from the game of the third Star Wars flick.

2026 WIN UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2

We've got 10 copies to give away. Enter now!

Microsoft Invades Japan

Japan's top developers to create games for Xbox 2.

THREE OF JAPAN'S most revered game developers have signed on the dotted line with Microsoft to create exclusive next-generation games for the upcoming Xbox 2 console. Those developers are Hironobu Sakaguchi from Mistwalker Game Studio, Yoshiki Okamoto from Game Republic and Tetsuya Mizuguchi from Q Entertainment.

Hironobu Sakaguchi is best known as the creator of Squaresoft's bestselling RPG series, *Final Fantasy*, which has sold over 60 million units worldwide. His sizeable portfolio of work includes other seminal RPGs like *Kingdom Hearts*, *Super Mario RPG*, *Vagrant Story* and *Xenogears*.

Yoshiki Okamoto, meanwhile, is known to the games industry for his involvement with Capcom and Nintendo. Some of the best known and most critically acclaimed titles he's worked on include *Resident Evil 2*, the *Powerstone* series, *Street Fighter 3: Third Strike*, *Capcom Vs SNK 2*, *Devil May Cry 2*, *Megaman* and the *Oracle* series of *The Legend of Zelda*.

And lastly, there's Tetsuya Mizuguchi, the man behind some of the most stylish games on Dreamcast and PlayStation 2 - *Space Channel 5* and *Rez*. Old-school gamers will also recognise him as the creative talent behind the classic *Sega Rally Championship*.

The addition of these developers to the Xbox's fold is a bold but calculated move by Microsoft to consolidate Japanese support for the Xbox brand. Despite its best efforts, Microsoft did not enjoy an equivalent level of success in Japan as it did here in Australia, nor the rest of the world. By securing the creative talents behind some of Japan's most popular game franchises, Microsoft has made a very early start to ensure history doesn't repeat itself with the upcoming Xbox 2 - the release date of which is anticipated to be late this year or early in 2006. The signings of such high-profile developers points towards a growing preference by game developers to work on Xbox 2.

"Microsoft's cutting-edge technologies in the next-generation platform will allow me to bring to

life an array of ideas that I have had for many years", Sakaguchi said. "I want these games to be alive with a new vision for gaming and vividly depict new characters that will find a place in the hearts of gamers and make time spent with my games a fond and long-lasting memory."

"My goal is to make completely fresh and riveting experiences that gamers have never had before", said Okamoto. "With the next generation Xbox platform, I can turn this vision into a reality".

"I've created video games that have brought gamers the ultimate fun in gaming", said Mizuguchi. "Now, I hope to create games that will give gamers the most emotional and thrilling gaming experience possible - joy, thrills, sympathy and speed."

Considering the amount of reader feedback that asks when *Final Fantasy* is coming to Xbox, the possibilities behind what could be developed are both significant and provocative. We'll have full details on the games being created by these developers as soon as they surface.

↓ Chun Li's "Love me for my mind" pose



P036 HARDWARE IN FOCUS

Doom 3 is yet another reason to love your Xbox.

P037 BRIAN LARA CRICKET

Ask and you shall receive. A cricket game is almost upon us.

P038 FORZA MOTORSPORT

New details on Microsoft's new flagship racing sim.

P032 RAINBOW SIX LOCKDOWN

The future of tactical shooters is looking very rosy!

P034 AGENT X

Fresh rumours from the industry. (Shh, don't tell anyone!)

P034 BOARD AS HELL

A most unlikely looking board game just entered the radar.

P036 COMMANDOS STRIKE FORCE

Exclusive interview with the project leader!

P039 PIRATES!

Like Pirates of the Caribbean, without Mr. Depp's eyeliner.

P042 X MEDIA

More new toys to plug and play with on your Xbox.

Secret Valley

Brisbane surging with a new wave of gaming

WE'RE BEING SHOWN the latest build of *Destroy All Humans*, and the scene could be at any leading US game studio. Veteran programmers are showing off their latest creation, a wicked little alien called Crypto. Sneaking through a blissful 1950s American town, he blends in perfectly thanks to a holographic disguise. After reading the minds of the unwitting citizens, he returns to his flying saucer and uses his death rays to rip suburbia apart.

There's more than a little irony at work here. This demonstration isn't taking place in steamy Los Angeles, but boom-town Brisbane. Pandemic Studios, packed to the rafters with Aussie talent, is blending in with the American gaming establishment. Getting inside the collective consciousness, the gaming public are none the wiser until they've been blown away. Pandemic are not alone, as Studios like Krome, Auran and Creative Assembly are turning inner-city Fortitude Valley into a gaming powerhouse.

Yet as the Australian Dollar grows stronger, the local industry is seeking new tactics for moving forward besides taking advantage of cheap development costs. Pandemic director Brad Welch believes it's high time Australians started striving for their own blockbuster titles, and *Destroy All Humans* is part of this push forward. "All the great series - *Metal Gear Solid*, *Halo*, *Grand Theft Auto* - they all started as an original [Intellectual Property]. That's definitely how we see ourselves building our future."

Like many Aussie studios, Pandemic has built itself up by handling adaptations like *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* and *Jimmy Neutron Boy Genius*. But tie-ins can only take you so far. As Brad asserts, if you want to start calling the shots, you have to create your own ideas. "It builds a future for your company. There's nothing wrong with doing licenced games at all, but as a company we want to be at the top of the industry."



Winner Take All?

Ubisoft absorbs Microsoft's sports titles

THE FRENCH VIDEO game giant Ubisoft recently announced the formation of a whole new arm to its publishing empire, with the imminent addition of a range of sporting titles. Leading this new wave will be an all-new golf game starring Vijay Singh, currently ranked the number one golf player in the world. While not a household name just yet, he managed to be the one to finally bump Tiger out of the No. 1 spot last year. Vijay means "victory" in Hindi, which could lead to an imaginative moniker for the as-yet unnamed title.

Of greater strategic significance is Ubisoft's acquisition of Microsoft's old line of team sports games. Microsoft recently announced that it was getting out of the first-party sports game market, and the home of Sam Fisher was there to pick up the slack. Ubisoft has now picked up the rights, source code and development tools to these games, and stated a commitment to continue these series on all consoles and into the next generation of machines.

The deal includes *NHL Rivals*, *NFL Fever*,

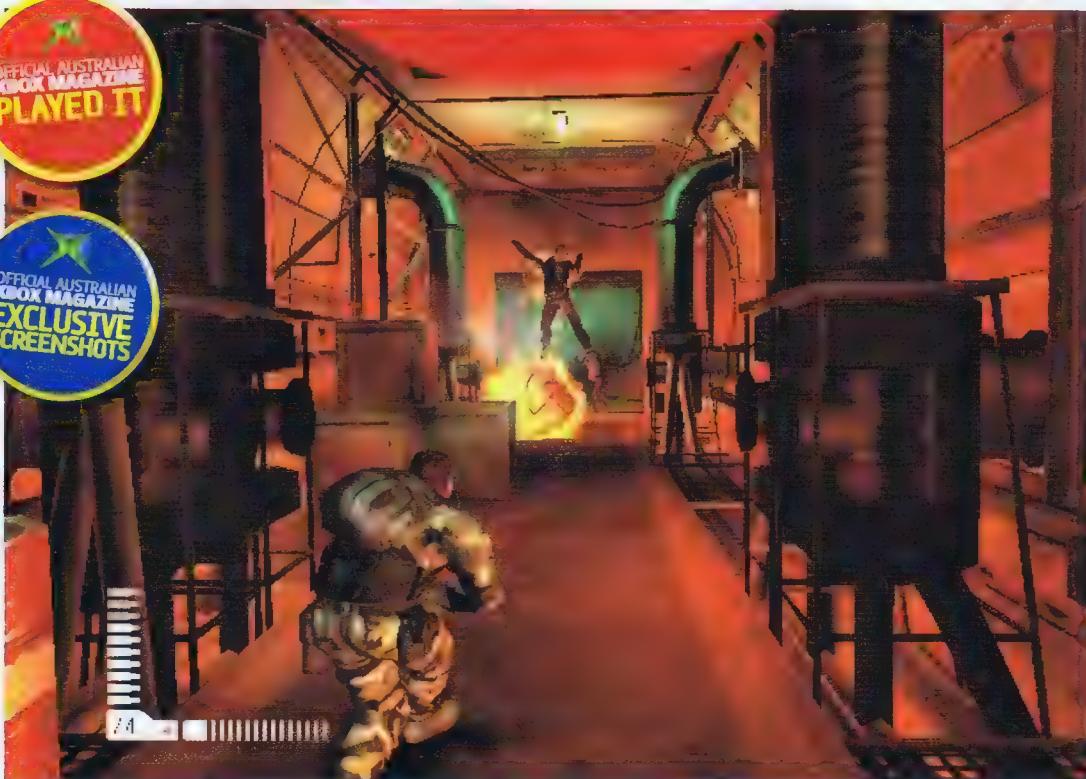
NBA Inside Drive and *MLB Inside Pitch*. Noticeable by their absence are Microsoft's old snowboarding, tennis and golf titles, which have already been sold to Take 2 Interactive.

Having achieved great success with licensed Tom Clancy games, this new sports division makes even more sense considering EA's recent purchase of a fifth of the shares in Ubisoft. This expanded and diversified software range is aimed at strengthening market share, and might just help the company's founders to keep the company out of the hands of the Americans.



↑ A Ubisoft-branded NFL game? Now we've seen everything...





↑ Our reluctant security guard must save hostages.



↑ Welcome to the party, pal! *Die Hard* fans rejoice!

Citizens On Patrol

Without Warning rewrites time and adventure gaming

→ YOU KNOW A game is striving for that special something when, within the first five minutes, an entire squad of special ops gets blown to bits, leaving the task of saving the world in the hands of a secretary and a doughnut-snacking security guard.

The debut title from Circle Studio, an impassioned band of ex-Lara Croft programmers, *Without Warning* is at first glance a blend of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Splinter Cell* and *Die Hard*, but that's where the similarities end. If you're a fan of 24 then prick up your ears because you're going to like this.

There are six characters, three of which are the remnants of a shattered special ops team sent into a chemical factory to stop terrorist skulduggery; the remaining three are civilians caught up in the mess. Set over a 12-hour period, the characters' storylines

interweave, with the actions of each affecting the fate of the rest, giving the game a unique dynamic.

Under the bonnet we caught a glimpse of some serious mastery of the Renderware engine, plus unique touches that bring the chemical plant to life such as dynamic lighting, chemical gas clouds and spills, plus the all important fully-shatterable glass.

Thanks to the team's *Tomb Raider* experience, the level design's been kept as cerebral as possible, but Circle's keen to emphasise this is not a 'Lara-does-Splinter-Cell'. The 24-inspired timeline-shifting is about as puzzle-oriented as it gets. The rest of the time *Without Warning* seems to be a blend of genres and adventure styles so fiendishly conceived and full of potential, it knocks Sam Fisher's linear narrative into a cocked hat. A real hot potato.



↑ Cause havoc and later another character will see the carnage.



↑ He's a little too 'Shaft' to be convincing.



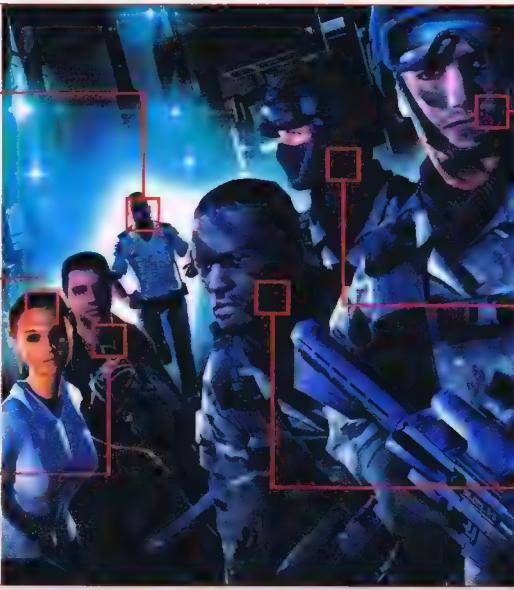
↑ Hide and the enemy won't know what's hit it.

SIX SHOOTER Trapped and frightened, our six heroes fighting for survival

The security guard. Our very own hostage rescuer. John McClane and his doughnut-loving cop pal rolled into one. Portly but important!

The secretary. Inadvertently opening pathways for the special ops team with her keycard, she spends the entire game unarmed, and trying to escape the chemical plant.

The camera man. In his quest for the best story he, like the secretary, is inadvertently helping the team by exposing terrorist positions. Will he reveal too much though?



Our bomb disposal man. It's always good to take the time to defuse anything we see when it's his turn to be used. If we don't, everyone else is strawberry jam.

Our all-round special-ops hero. Great for clearing large areas but a specialist in nothing particular. Keeps terrorist numbers down so he's important!

The sniper. Clear corridors and high areas of enemy snipers with this guy. Without him the others will be picked off even before they start.



CT Special Forces: Fire For Effect

Not much to look at, but it's packing more than a mean punch

 CT SPECIAL FORCES has already had a fairly long run on GBA and PlayStation. While there's nothing particularly innovative about this action shooter, the gameplay moves like lightning, the weapons fire with great reliability and pinpoint

accuracy and the whole thing just shouts 'fun'. We had loads of laughs with the preview version, trying out the weapons and messing about with the exaggerated ragdoll physics. Here are just some of the things we like in the first three missions.



↑ The special agent known as Owl has a magnetic grenade that sucks metal crates and barrels towards it.



↑ Raptor's evaluation missions take place in the Arctic, so what better way to get around than on a skidoo?



↑ Raptor is a strong guy, so packing both a Nical heat-seeking rocket launcher and a Frag RPG is easy.



↑ Not every situation demands direct combat. Owl's stealth shield lets you slip past enemies unnoticed.



↑ Raptor's fog grenades do a pretty good job of blinding the enemy but their range and duration is limited.



↑ Owl's sonar beam allows you to scan and spot invisible doors, and see what's on the other side of thin walls.

 Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Is it a Superman-shaped videogame currently in production at EA to tie in with the film release? Ah yes, that's what it is



↑ Nothing is more satisfying than wiping out the entire field.

Button Mashing

The top-down redline racer returns - Mashed is now loaded with max power

 IF YOU'VE SEEN *Apocalypse Now*, you'll appreciate what a bit of spit and polish can do to a previously released classic. There wasn't a lot wrong with the original *Mashed* (Issue 30, 8.6) in our eyes, but Empire has seen fit to re-release this mental slice of multiplayer madness with new additional features.

Mashed Fully Loaded boasts a new total of 15 different vehicles, which, unlike its predecessor, actually feature varied handling. New course variations are obviously included (Turbo, Night and Ice being the distinct standouts), taking advantage

of the title's significant graphical polish. All the familiar weapons return (as do the friendship-shattering airstrikes), though the camera is a bit more user-friendly.

Speaking of which, collectable weapons are now easier to understand for novices, thanks to the handy text that accompanies each one. New single-player modes mean the Campaign side of the game now consists of 60 levels, and the additional Training mode beefs up what was lacking first time round. Not entirely original we know, but at \$49.95 it's a snip. Full review very soon.



↑ 'Barrels of Justice', as they're known at OXM.



↑ We'll be getting out of his slipstream then.

News Wire

Easily digestible nuggets of key Xbox information

Halo 3 Trailer Unlocked

NEWS JUST IN: During a brief visit to Bungie's offices, a programmer who wished to remain anonymous hinted that a trailer for *Halo 3* is sitting right in our *Halo 2* game discs! All we have to do is enter a code at the end of the game. When Gravemind starts talking to Cortana, press up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, B, A, B, A. The trailer immediately follows. Email us with your results - we'll have pics next issue!

Maniac Baby

Some have said *Family Guy* is superior to *The Simpsons* (and... discuss!), so fans will be chuffed to their cherry that a game based on the oddball cartoon is winging its way over. Brought to us by Take-Two, the game will be a third-person arcade affair in which we control each member of the family. Not a patch on driving Homer around in a giant hotdog though, we bet!

Phoenix Quashed

An exclusive bit of unfortunate news now, we're afraid. Looks like *Iron Phoenix* won't be seeing an Australian release after all. We spoke to a Sega spokesperson this month and they confirmed our worst fears. The online multiplayer brawler will still see a Stateside release, but the PAL conversion is on hold. Cue 'phoenix from the ashes' puns as we hold out for a future release.

Back Under Fire

OXM's Unsung Hero of 2004 gets a sequel

 JUST AS WE were going to press, news came our way regarding the Xbox *Kingdom Under Fire* sequel. The working title is *Kingdom Under Fire: Heroes* and will centre around the continuing struggle between elves and men for domination of the globe. A total of seven new characters will be available, plus a wealth of brand new online game modes. New Live fight styles will be included, as will new character sets such as troops and heroes, and the option for co-op battles. It's great to see that a title overlooked by so many has proved itself worthy of a sequel. More next month.

→ Sexy or just damned scary? You decide.



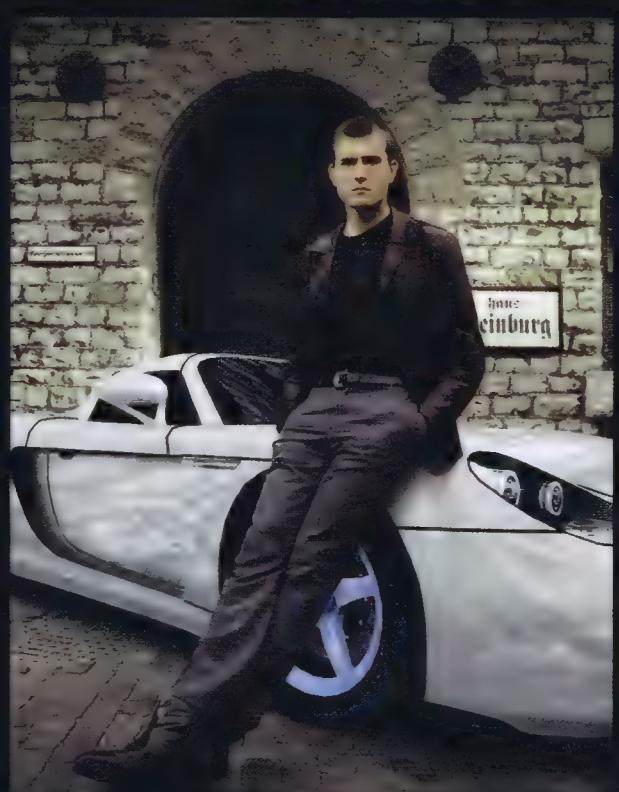


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it's good to play together

XBOX LIVE



Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith

What a Wookieed game you play, to make us feel this way...

Dev: LucasArts	Pub: LucasArts
Release: May 2005	Live: None
Players: 1	
Percentage Complete:	100

THIS IS THE moment all *Star Wars* fans have been waiting for, and we can exclusively reveal not only new glimpses of the *Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* game, but also some of the inhabitants and locations of movie as well.

Revenge of the Sith will heavily feature both Wookiees and the Wookiee planet Kashyyyk (plus

Coruscant and two other as-yet-unveiled movie planets), and we managed to get our mitts on some truly impressive concept art of the new Wookiees, and these exclusive new screens as well.

Playing as both Anakin (boo, hiss!) and Obi-Wan (yay!), the game will span the new movie, but also expand on the universe with especially written stunt sections created by film stunt co-ordinator Nick Gillard. LucasArts is also keen to announce the vast range of powers at our fingertips, including those that come by wielding the lightsabers. We'll be able to cleave droids in two, fight various Jedi from the movie, and cut through scenery with the 'sabers as well. Doors, walls and blast shields will

all fall thanks to a well-inserted 'saber, just as they'll fall through the sheer impact of the Force.

We'll be throwing scenery around and hauling droids into the air over 16 levels. Look out for General Grievous's mechanical henchmen and the way we can pin them to the floor and slice them in two like we're working on the Coles deli counter. There's obviously going to be a big slab of *Episode III* plot involved (duh), and while this may give away a few previously hinted-at clashes (Anakin batters Mace Windu) and plenty of Wookiee action, we're still promised a unique experience that not only builds on the movie, but has us sitting in a pool of drool gagging for the May release.



CHEZ CHEWIE A first look at Kashyyyk and its secrets...

Wookiees will have specific sniping points all around their wooden city, where they'll attack with their bowcasters.

Huge wooden buildings will nestle in the trees so be careful where you point that lightsaber.

We suspect the Wookiees will be attacked in the game, but we're not sure by whom. Our money's on droids.

Being communal creatures, Wookiee elders will take counsel around these village fires.

Holographic communicators will relay to the Wookiees details of the battle that will engulf them. We might even get orders from here.

Looks like Yoda will be joining us at points throughout the Kashyyyk levels. Only the bearded one himself knows exactly why though.

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IN MY OPINION

"Burnie Cinders"

THE XBOX, I THINK we can all agree, has been a success. A win for Microsoft, blazing their way into a whole new market sector. A wonderful new toy for game designers, widening the bottlenecks that have cramped their creativity. Mainly, it's been a triumph for gamers. Fresh competition for staid old Sony, and a multiverse of new gaming horizons to explore. In a few short years, so much has changed. How many of us could imagine a world without *Halo*?

So as the Xbox 2 draws near, it was quite jolt for us to be reminded of the physical limitations of the device. To wit, the recent product recall announced for the Xbox power cord. While the vast majority of Xbox consoles have worked for years without incident, it seems 30 or so suffered from a minor design flaw - the power cord would spontaneously catch on fire.

It brings to mind an edition of this column from way back in Issue 02. My predecessor predicted that due to the bulky weight and chunky size of the Xbox (not to mention legal disclaimers in the documentation regarding this massive bulk) it would only be a matter of time before some unfortunate tyke would be crushed beneath one. Fortunately, this never happened. Unfortunately, another design flaw wiggled its way into the spotlight.

The greatest failure of the Xbox was and is its form factor - it is quite literally a PC in a different box. In the past four years, even PC cases have diminished in size. Just recently, the world was given the Mac Mini, a fully-functional PC smaller than a lunchbox. The PS2 has shed most of its weight, now a mere sliver atop your AV stack. Our beloved box? It has become ever-so-slightly slimmer, and greener, but still betrays the brute force philosophy behind its design.

Microsoft engineers are doubtless fine-tuning the design for the Xbox 2 as you read these words. Cramping in more power, more memory, more of what makes good games great. We can imagine they're also doing their level best to ensure it won't set our living rooms ablaze. But what about our imaginations? Will they be set alight?

The last generation of consoles showed us more clearly than ever that there's more to design than just engineering - there's also a thing called aesthetics. Thousands of words have gushed in the gaming press about the PS2's blue power light. Even detractors admit the Phantom looked neat.

Will the Xbox of tomorrow soar like a sex god, or sink like a brick? Soon, very soon, we will know.

Sharaz Jek is an independent journalist. His views do not necessarily reflect those of the Official Australian Xbox Magazine.

COMPETITION...COMPETITION...COMPETITION...COMPETITION...

WIN UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2

Read the review, play the demo, and then WIN IT!

After you've read through our exclusive six-page review of *Unreal Championship 2* (on page 064) and thoroughly caned the playable demo on this month's disc, there's only one thing left for a prospective fan to do: buy it.

But wait! With thanks to Red Ant, the Official Australian Xbox Magazine is pleased to offer you the chance to win one of ten (yes, ten!) copies of *Unreal Championship 2*. Just hop online and register with our website on www.derwenthoward.com.au, click on the Official Australian Xbox Magazine and enter the competition!



↑ Fancy a shoot 'em up? Enter our competition!



HARDWARE IN FOCUS

Xbox gets *Doom 3*, but how the heck did they pull it off? Asher Moses investigates.

While it's clear that the Xbox is the most powerful console available, few believed that its 64MB of memory, 733MHz processor and Nvidia-powered GPU would have the grunt required to run a game as demanding as *Doom 3*. So how did developer Vicarious Visions overcome this technological barrier? There are a number of factors to consider.

Firstly, most PAL televisions run at a resolution below 1024x768 with 576 lines on-screen, so the developers could lower the texture resolution quite significantly without it being noticeable to your average gamer.

Furthermore, the advantages of having a constant hardware configuration allows each piece of hardware to be used to its full potential. For example, Xbox's built-in GPU effects ensure that all of the lighting prowess, normal maps, shadows and character models seen in the PC version can be transferred over to the Xbox version with relative ease, and since the *Doom 3* engine was originally developed with Nvidia technology in mind, it can almost be considered a perfect match.

Another issue that Vicarious Visions needed to consider was how it was going to store such large textures in just 64MB of system memory. This was rectified by splitting the levels into smaller segments. As an added bonus, this makes loading times far shorter as fewer textures need to be stored.

As for audio effects, *Doom 3* supports the Xbox's 5.1 channel surround sound mode,



ensuring that the scare-factor is maintained as players hear monsters creeping up from all sides.

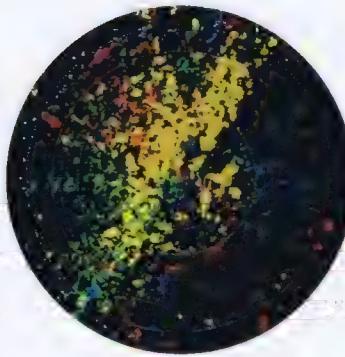
Aside from these slight differences, there isn't much to separate the Xbox and PC versions of the game, which we're sure is what the developers were aiming for. Suffice to say, given the technical capabilities of other consoles, it's unlikely *Doom 3* will surface on any other console format, or at least anything of equivalent lustre, which is just fine by us Xbox owners.

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News Wire

Easily digestible nuggets of key Xbox information

Wherefore Art Thou, Romeo?

A strange licence to snap up perhaps, but we'll soon be getting a taster of what it means to be an Alfa Romeo driver. Developer Black Bean told us this month that it's signed a deal with the Italian car manufacturer to bring us a title based exclusively around the Romeo series. Due from release some time towards the end of 2005/beginning 2006, the game will feature the entire back catalogue of Alfa Romeo vehicles. Hey, if Ford can do it, what's to stop these guys?

Xbox, Xbox, Everywhere

Microsoft gave us another wet dollop of good news to devour this month, with the announcement of its five millionth birth. Yes, Xbox number 5,000,000 was bought somewhere out there in Europe this month, marking an important milestone for the future of Xbox. Since it first went on sale in March 2002, Xbox has steadily grown in both stature and status, and with five million of us on board for the ride now, things just keep getting better.

Pill Popper

There's a gruesome game in the 'pipe'line headed to Xbox soon. Called *Overdose*, the game will be another one of those delicious GTA-style free-roamers we've learned to love. As a narcotics officer we'll have to infiltrate a drugs ring by posing as a dealer, then crack it from the inside out. Published by SCi in the US, we've had the official 'nothing to say at present' from SCi regarding a PAL release, but watch this space.

Cyber Men

World Cyber Games welcomes the Chief

THE ANNUAL World Cyber Games announced its line-up for this year's contest this month, and of the eight featured game, four were Xbox titles. *FIFA Football 2005*; *Need for Speed Underground 2*; *Dead or Alive Ultimate* and *Halo 2* were all unveiled as games we'll need to work our way through if we stand a chance of being named the ultimate World Cyber Game Champion 2005. For more details about the competition and for an entry form, log on to www.worldcybergames.com. Don't forget to let us know how you get on!



Googly Box

Brian Lara's Cricket to hit Xbox

"I'M OFTEN asked when a new one is coming," Brian Lara tells us in the warm-up to 2005's *Brian Lara's International Cricket*, but it seems hard to believe it's been five years since we saw Lara on any console, let alone on Xbox (this'll be its debut). It's even harder to imagine that it's been a full decade since its original outing, but Codies is bringing it back with a bang rather than the gentle crack of leather on willow.

One-day internationals, test matches, famous historical clashes, and even the 1882 match that saw the creation of the Ashes will be at our fingertips, allowing us to sample just about every aspect of cricket possible. Codies also tells us it's done a deal with the ICC to offer up fully authentic real name players, venues and authentic strips with word that WC Grace himself will be playable.

Unfortunately it doesn't look as though *Brian Lara's International Cricket* will be supporting any Xbox Live features, but four players - two per team - will be able to play on a single screen. Players can join the team at any time during a match, providing perfect drop in or drop out play (we all know what those five-day tests are like).

Featuring all the official ICC One-Day International teams, with 16 players per squad, and grounds including The Oval, Newlands and Edgbaston, *Brian Lara International Cricket* looks like it's going to be in for a good innings. Watch this space for more details soon.



↑ It's been five years, but Brian Lara still hopes to hit a six.



↑ Dynamic new cameras a go-go.



↑ Famous grounds get an innings.

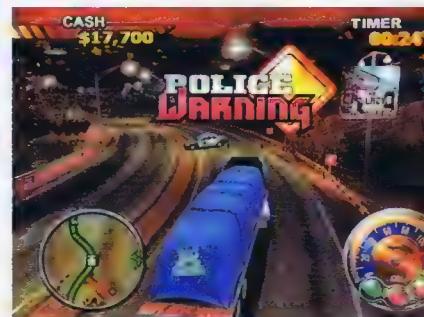
Vampire hunters might be interested to hear about Sega's mysterious new game it's currently calling 'Blood Will Tell'. More news as we get it.



↑ Bigger rigs and crazier courses could make *Truckers 2* into a diesel-powered *Burnout*.



↑ Shunt coppers if they're in the way!



↑ Taking a leaf from *Burnout 3*?

Trucked Right Up

Big Mutha Truckers 2 bites Burnout's bumper

BIG MUTHA *Truckers 2: Truck Me Harder*, now there's a name. The sequel to the strangely compelling matriarchal road burner, *Trucker Me Harder* is heading our way in a month and once again sees Ma Jackson causing all manner of automotive mayhem. Having been banged up in jail for tax evasion, we'll once again have to climb into our rigs to raise enough cash to bribe the jury in her impending case.

The trading system will be implemented again (only this time we're raising bribe money rather than outdoing our siblings), but publisher Empire Interactive has told us it'll be far more streamlined.

Perhaps taking a few hints from the hugely successful *Burnout 3* (Issue 32, 9.2), *Trucker 2* will now pack in enough carnage to draw comparisons between the two. Routes through the game will be multi-stranded as they were the first time around, only this time we're going to be given the chance to explore just about every highway and backwater possible thanks to the new free-roaming game design. The violence quota has gone through the roof, and we'll be rewarded vast sums of money for performing ludicrous stunts and knocking cop cars off the road. Is this just going to be *Burnout 3* with big rigs? It seems like it, and that's no bad thing.



World Championship Snooker 2005

A new publisher plus a bevy of new features

Dev: Blade Interactive	Pub: Sega
Release: April 2005	Live: 2-4 players
Players: 1-4	
0	Percentage Complete 80 100

JUST AS THE new snooker season is gaining momentum, Sega has announced that it's seized the popular *World Championship Snooker* franchise away from Codemasters. Not only that, but developer Blade Interactive has some major enhancements in store.

Last year's roster of 32 players has been boosted to an immense 103! With that many players, we'd hate to think that they all look the

same, but Blade has also created six player models for different heights, weights and builds. Impressively, there's double the amount of animation, and the players even add their own spoken comments after a great shot or when the balls are running badly for them.

There's also a new, more tactile control system. The distance the analogue stick is moved back determines the force of the shot, while the smooth movement of the stick forward dictates the follow-through. Plus, Xbox Live features include Joe Davis's modified billiards game, Snooker Plus, and the ability to play doubles with three friends.

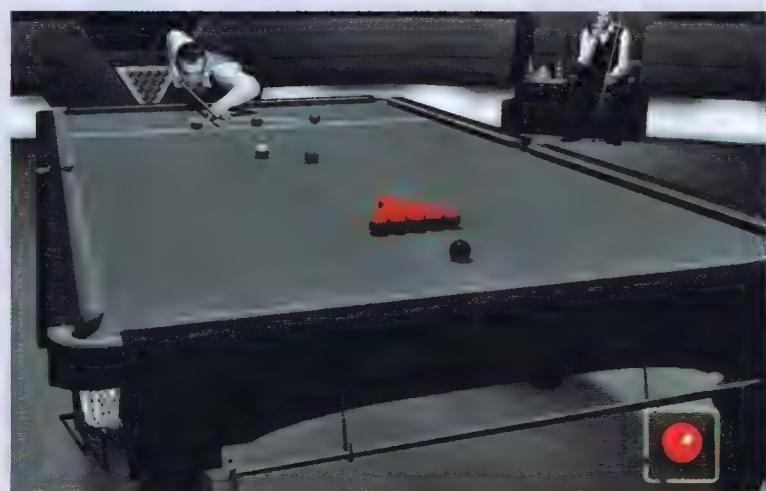
Next month, we'll put WCS2005's new control system to the test and have a full rundown of the game's Career mode in our review.



↑ The Whirlwind Jimmy White finally makes the move to WCS!



↑ Expect to see increased realism thanks to double the amount of animation.



↑ Some of the very early classic matches appear in black and white.

Forza Motorsport

Drive every car you've ever dreamed of

Dev: Microsoft	Pub: Microsoft
Release: April 2005	Live: 2-8 players
Players: 1-2 Split	
0	Percentage Complete 80 100

MORE THAN 230 cars are appearing in *Forza Motorsport*, and we've seen the complete list - not to mention been lucky enough to have a crack at the vastly improved build that Microsoft has been showing off. A few unsure words went around regarding the first *Forza* demo we saw. It was too hard, gave too much fun over for realism, and so on, but these factors have been massively overhauled for a code which is looking to be close to final.

As well as a far greater sense of speed (which of course means the handling has had to be improved), there's now a real sense that these cars are actually 'on the track'. There's a weight to them, and gear shifts can be felt, just as inertia pulls on us when cornering. None of this really had an impact before, but now it's been fuel injected into the code.

On a less subtle note, new racing-line guide arrows have been included (optional) to help us learn the curve of a course whereas before we were often sat arse-end in a sand trap watching the field disappear before us. It appears Microsoft has thoroughly listened to feedback from racing



↑ Bombing along an oval isn't as easy as it looks.

fans, and is about to deliver something of a doozy. Is it a *GT*-beater then? Well, comparisons are being discouraged in the Xbox camp, and with *Gran Turismo 4* receiving a glowing reception it's understandable. We get the feeling the *Forza* team is more than aware of the situation, though, and *Forza* has the online advantage.



↑ Get shunted and the race can still be won.

So much choice it Hertz

OUR RESIDENT car nut Owen offers his pick of the best cars from the 230-plus vehicles. Disagree? Log onto xbox.com, follow the *Forza* link, then email us and let us know what car you're most looking forward to driving.

- 1967 AC Shelby Cobra
- 1985 Porsche 959
- 1999 Dodge Viper GTS ACR
- 1999 Pagani Zonda C12
- 2003 BMW Motorsport M3 GTR
- 2003 Ferrari Racing 550 Maranello
- 2003 Nissan 350Z Track
- 2003 TVR Tuscan S
- 2004 Bentley Continental GT
- 2004 Subaru Impreza WRX STI Special
- 2005 Aston Martin DB9 Coupe
- 2005 Ford Mustang GT



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Rainbow Six Lockdown

Could this be a glimpse of the end of the Rainbow?

Dev: Ubisoft	Pub: Ubisoft
Release: TBA 2005	Live: 2-8 players
Players: 2-4 Split	
0	Percentage Complete 80 100

"THE THEME we've been going for is Rainbow Six under attack," game designer Jean-Pascal Cambiotti tells us. "You'll be in situations where Rainbow isn't exactly in charge, in pinned-down situations - situations where members of Rainbow are taken hostage and you have to go in and rescue them."

It's clear even at this stage, that there are fistfuls of modifications in *Lockdown*, some of which clearly add to the experience. The HUD has been drastically changed to incorporate a new goggle view system (these can get steamed up, cracked, or wet depending on the abuse you suffer), but the team control HUD has been altered too.

"We've really streamlined how you interact with doors and approach the next room," Cambiotti says. "It's a two-step approach, telling the team what to do to the door and what to do once they're past it. For example, you can use a Shotgun command followed by a Clear order, using a Go code. They'll then blast in and intelligently clear the room." It cuts down on complex commands, but let's hope *Lockdown* doesn't shift too far in the direction of an arcade shooter. An indication that it might be doing just that is the visible parabola now used when throwing a grenade. It's there to help a novice player but crucially, Cambiotti tells us, "It's not an option to turn that off."

Importantly perhaps, environments will now be far more involving than before, with our team actively seeking shadows to fire from, and windows



▲ The muzzle flash dies and so does the enemy.



▲ The squad will intelligently move into shadow then spring out on unsuspecting enemies and attack.

of cars and buildings shattering on impact. Havok physics will mean plenty of falling debris too, although much of what we saw tended to be scripted rather than real-time.

In total, *Lockdown* will feature 14 maps divided into chunks, and each of these sections will test the mettle of the Rainbow squad, itself having expanded beyond the usual Ding Chavez crew. "There are a lot more Rainbow operatives and they are a lot more quirky to get the player more attached," Cambiotti says. "They are assigned to your team per mission, and eventually you'll work with them all."

With new sniper missions, a multiplayer mode that allows us to play as bad guys, plus character information saved on Microsoft servers that will enable characters to grow and develop online, it seems the face of *Rainbow Six* will be drastically altered. Will hardcore fans appreciate the change? Only time will tell. The release has just been delayed, so watch this space for more updates. □

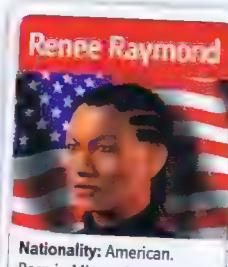


▲ All weapons have improved sniper scopes for added accuracy.

RAINBOW FRIGHT Six new colours of the Rainbow...



Nationality: Egyptian.
Joined the Egyptian army and Task Force 777, Egypt's counter-terrorism force. Also SAS trained before joining the Rainbow Six squad.



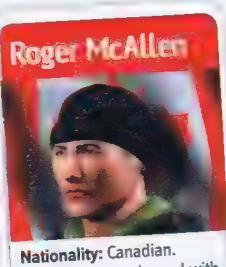
Nationality: American.
Born in Missouri, Renee studied at the University of Oklahoma before enlisting with the American Marine Corps. Served in Kuwait.



Nationality: Israeli.
Conscripted into the Israeli army, she was transferred to Sayeret Mat'kal (the Israeli army's hostage release unit) before joining the squad.



Nationality: South Korean.
Enlisted into the 707th Special Mission Battalion, he quickly became squad leader. Great leadership and fighting skills.



Nationality: Canadian.
A field engineer charged with the care of heavy explosives. Joined the Special Emergency Response unit for Canada before becoming a Rainbow.

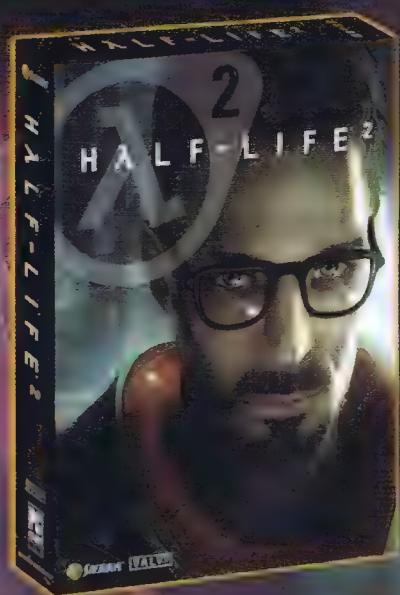


Nationality: Swedish.
An expert in electronic surveillance, Annika worked exclusively for the Stockholm police force before joining the Rainbow Six team.





DESIGNED ON RADEON
BEST ON RADEON



► Freeze Frame

Jade Empire's trailer secrets exposed

AS BIOWARE'S epic oriental RPG rolls ever closer, we take a look at some of the juicy goodness we can expect upon release. To watch the full trailer in full, log on at www.bioware.com



↑ Like KOTOR, dual wielding is included. These double sabre attacks are both poetic and devastating.



↑ Elemental powers, like this Freeze attack, affect the environment. It starts snowing indoors when spells are cast.



↑ Changing into a demon form sucks chi energy away but the lighting and particle effects are superb.



↑ Nasty. Blood spatter and gushing arteries are new. Expect a lot of these when attacking using chi energy.



↑ Improvised weapons, such as these hams, will appear throughout levels. Pick them up or else they'll vanish.

AGENT X

MYST CLEARING

While on reconnaissance around Paris, I discovered some interesting information regarding the *Myst* franchise. Having already been confirmed as a US Xbox release, *Myst IV: Revelation* is almost certainly coming to Australia as well. I managed to speak to an Ubisoft bod, and after a lot of being put on hold and chatter in the background, I was brushed off the scent - the scent of an award-winning puzzle game methinks!

GOING PSYCHO

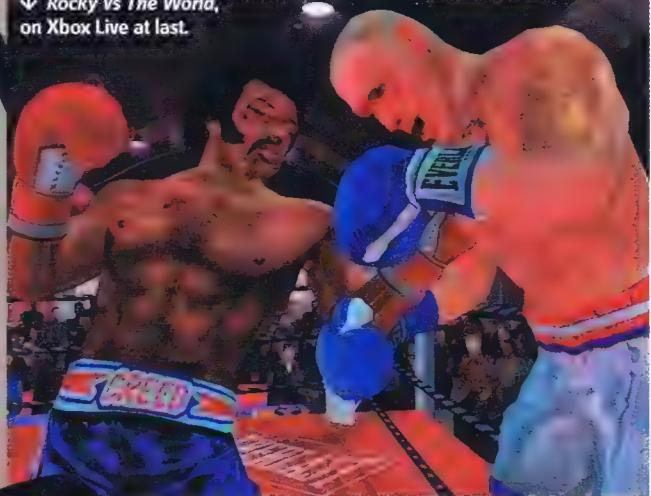
Long in development it might have been, and slated only for a US release as well, but I hear word on the interactive grapevine that bizarre actioner *Psychonauts* could finally be coming to Xbox. Although no Australian publisher has officially signed on to bring us the game, there is a buzz in the air all of a sudden regarding the game's future. Odds on for a 2005 release.

ROCKY VS THE WORLD?

Good news, *Rocky* fans! While suffering the indignity of posing as a punch bag in some seedy downtown Brooklyn gym, I dug up news on *Rocky*'s future. A Live-enabled follow-up to *Rocky Legends* could well be on its way, entitled *Rocky Vs The World*. Although this version isn't markedly different from the previous game it will feature more characters, stages, upgraded visuals and Live!

Delving into enemy territory to bring you all the gossip from the world of games

→ Rocky Vs The World, on Xbox Live at last.



TOO GOOD

Beyond *Good & Evil* fans will be glad to hear what I've found out from Ubisoft's development vaults. It looks like a sequel will be going ahead, and the first game might actually have been part of a trilogy, the third part forming a possible next-gen launch title.

← BG&E sequel-tastic!

↓ More Myst rolling in?



Fans of Headhunter will be pleased to know that a sequel, *Headhunter 2*, is rumoured to be in the works. More news soon!

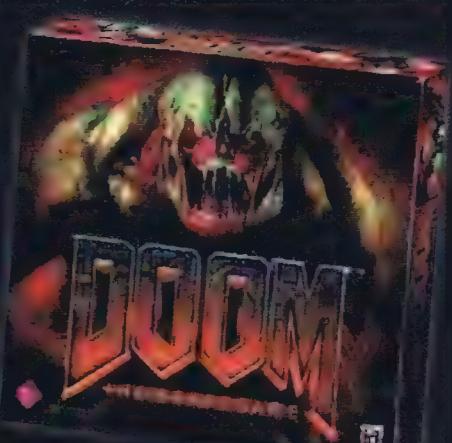
→ AND FINALLY...

Board As Hell

Doom 3 becomes a family boardgame!

→ THERE'S NOTHING worse than trying to play *Doom 3* through the back of a sofa. There is little joy to be found when dripping Martian jaws clamping down on your skull have you diving for cover (or the toilet). So what better, and presumably cleaner way to experience *Doom*, than the *Doom* boardgame. It's *decal-Doom*, *Doom-Lite* if you will. Available from www.fantasyflightgames.com/doom, the board game features all the hideous brain munchers of the videogame, but in miniaturised mould-injected plastic form. Terrifying!

There are over 60 finely detailed characters in the game, plus every weapon, level and upgrade we know from the console version. It's one of those multi-sided dice rolling affairs, so we'll have to make up for our cowardice with calculations, but that's the price you pay for being a yellow belly. How cool would this look on the coffee table?



← Can the whole family fit behind the sofa?

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QA

Commandos Strike Force

Your country needs you! José Manuel García, project leader of *Commandos* does too

Dev: Pyro	Pub: Eidos
Release: Summer 2005	Live: TBA players
Players: 1-2	
B	Percentage Complete 70 100

TELL US HOW *Commandos Strike Force* came about then - we are all massive fans of the original game.

I'm really glad you liked the PC game. From our point of view the *Commandos* saga was a nice challenge to many players, and we could easily talk for long hours about the different missions and the ways of solving them.

Going back to your question, I think it was the logical step after *Commandos 3: Destination Berlin* [on PC], which as you know, was the end of the saga. We could have added a few more things to the game in order to develop a *Commandos 4*, but on one hand we were not sure if that would justify a *Commandos 4*, and on the other hand we didn't want to be out of the console world with another strategy game. So we are very happy working on a development that will allow us to take a different perspective and also to bring the *Commandos* to the console world.

We found with *Commandos 2* **that huge amounts of patience and forward thinking were required. Will we still have to be just as patient or is the game now much more of a shooter?**

Commandos 2 was a huge game, and there were parts of the game where players got frustrated because of the time that was needed to fulfil certain objectives, that is true. We have learned a lot from the previous *Commandos* thanks to the

fans. In this case, *Commandos Strike Force* is a different type of game; it is a shooter, and although it is not the type of shooter where you just need to care about shooting anything that moves on the screen, it will not be as hard and as difficult as the previous *Commandos* were.

Here, on many occasions the player will choose the pace of the game, and if he decides to do some planning, he will be rewarded. Our aim is to develop a game with many challenges, and is therefore fun to play. Also we want to reward the players that take some additional efforts or challenges. To give you an easy example of this, it will not be the same taking care of an enemy with a heavy machine-gun as with a knife, and we will acknowledge that.

What has turning the series into a first-person game allowed you to accomplish with regards to gameplay? For example, new features, new modes of play etc.

Changing to a first-person perspective has a lot of implications, but we have also changed the genre of the game. From strategy we have moved to a first-person shooter, so now we are playing in a different world. We are also using a third-person camera to show some special moments. The different modes of play will come with the different abilities of each of the *Commandos*.

Has the gameplay changed dramatically now the series has gone three dimensional?

Yes it has, especially because we have moved from a top-down strategy game to a first-person shooter. So now you will not be giving orders to your *Commandos*, but executing the actions with each one of them. That is going to be a big change.



↑ José Manuel García.

The levels of the previous title were huge - will these new ones be just as sprawling and difficult to move through?

Well, *Strike Force* is a console-oriented game, and that means that the approach will be completely different to a PC game. In some missions we will have urban scenarios while others will be wide open. We will try to avoid frustrating players with immense maps, but that does not mean that it will be an easy game.

How many levels will there be, and over what time period? Are they going to be based on real-world events?

Commandos Strike Force will feature three different campaigns, located in France, Stalingrad and Norway, with a different number of levels in each campaign. The action takes place during the Second World War, and although we are using some real scenarios, the actions are not based on historical missions.

Will we have to use decoys, plant bombs, and wear disguises as before?

Yes, people who have played any *Commandos* games before will find several elements from the previous releases, like the possibility of using cigarettes or the ability of the spy to change uniforms in order to talk to the enemies and distract them. Obviously *Strike Force* will feature some brand new elements too.

Tell us a little about the characters. A lot of us warmed to the previous bunch - will these lot be just as engaging?

We hope they will. We will be playing with a spy, a Green Beret and a sniper. There will be time to >>



Even the Commandos won't be a match for these giant beasts. Not unless we're given a sapper, of course.



Sniping will be invaluable when taking out foes.



Remember not to leave footprints in the snow!



One well-placed Molotov and a tank's gunner will be frying in his seat.



You'll have to place men in the right areas to bring about victory.

» find out how these guys got involved in the Commandos team and what the abilities are for each one of them.

I think that one of the big differences will be that we will be solving different parts of the game with all of them, sometimes playing with two commandos at the same time. This means that we will be using the potential of the three, and we will not be trying to solve all the missions with the same one.

Any cameos from the original? Will Whiskey the dog be in there, for example?

Well, we are not final on this yet, but there could be a surprise.

Will Strike Force be as unforgiving as the previous title? A lot of us like a really big challenge, it'd be great to have that element back again.

Our intention is to propose many challenges but with three different levels of difficulty in the game, it will be more for the player to decide the level of challenge he is going to go for. If you asked me to synthesise the concept of the game in just one

word, I would use 'choice', so hopefully we will not disappoint you.

Will we be getting Xbox Live play this time around, and if so, what kind of features can we expect to see?

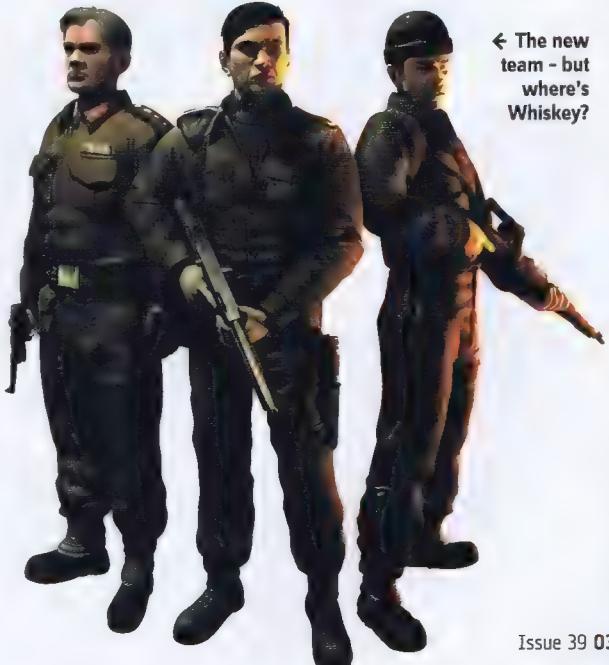
Yes, there is going to be an important online part in *Commandos Strike Force*. Up to eight players will be able to play four different multiplayer modes. We will, of course, have the classic deathmatch and team deathmatch modes, but also two additional multiplayer modes completely different to anything that has been done before. I'm sure you will understand that at this point we cannot go into many more details.

What is your favourite aspect of the new game?

The possibility of playing with characters that have different and interesting abilities.

Tell us something you haven't told anyone else about *Commandos Strike Force*.

Hmm, nice question. Okay, *Commandos Strike Force* will not be an isolated game, but part of something else.



The new team - but where's Whiskey?

"The men I led into Normandy were a squad,
the men I led out were brothers"

Sgt Matt Baker - 101st Airborne



BROTHERS IN ARMS™ ROAD TO HILL 30

www.brothersinarmsgame.com



PlayStation.2



XBOX
LIVE



gearbox
SOFTWARE



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Make for port

Sid Meier's Pirates! abandons PC ship and heads for console dock with a treasure chest of Xbox exclusive booty...

Words: Ben Lawrence

OUR GAME has been called GTA with pirates," Jeff Briggs, CEO of Firaxis Games, tells us as we sit watching fleets of galleons blast the brass monkeys out of one another. "I think it's an apt comparison. Of course though..." he pauses and gives us a wry »

Exclusive Access: Sid Meier's Pirates! Interview

XBOX

» smile, "...we did it first." A game described by many as 'one of those rare games that managed to give something to everyone', *Sid Meier's Pirates!* was out free-roam adventuring the sevens seas long before *Grand Theft Auto* was even in training wings. And now it's back.

Our first question to Meier, as we catch up with him high up in a snow-covered Baltimore office where the current game is in development, is why the hell it took so long. His answer is simple...

"I've heard that question from fans of *Pirates!* for so many years," says Meier, "but it's simply a matter of technology. 3D technology simply allows us to now put on screen what we imagined back in the day, and make it a far more cinematic experience than before. That, of course, and the fact Firaxis has been working on so many other titles." Of these, pretty much all have gone on to be some kind of 'editor's pick' and they've certainly cemented themselves in the consciousness of gamers. Would it not just be kinder to leave us with our memories rather than upsetting the fanboy applecart?

"No, not at all," smiles Meier, "we've had fans contacting us every month since the original *Pirates!* first came out [back in 1987], and we've listened. This team has done a really good job of walking the line between keeping the essence of what *Pirates!* is about while introducing new elements for a new generation of gamers. The old game's charm is still there. When we first designed *Pirates!* 17 years ago we really didn't think of games in distinct genres. But today there are shooters, real-time strategies, role-playing games, first-person shooters, platformers... and people start to think of games having to be limited to one particular genre. *Pirates!* breaks the

mould - it's all mixed up together. It's one of the game's strengths. In fact, we've encompassed a greater number of genres this time around."

They certainly have. One of which is the rhythm dancing genre (an odd choice perhaps, but one Meier quickly explains is integral to the new direction *Pirates!* is heading); and another being a new stealth element. These are perhaps the two genres that have defined the past few years in consoles, so including them is a sensible step for extending the *Pirates!* world when you think about it.

"Obviously we had to get [rhythm dancing] in there," explains Meier. "You'll now be able to impress the governor's daughter by taking her to the ball. Keep in



"Not every game has to be about destroying things... dancing brings life to the character"

Sid Meier

time with the music and not only will you impress her, but she in turn might impress upon you the whereabouts of a treasure map. Stumble around out of time and you'll put her to shame among her peers."

At first glance the dancing may seem like an odd choice, but the new element of timed sequence dancing is indicative of what Firaxis is actually aiming for.

"There was a lot of controversy concerning the dancing," says Meier, "but romancing the governor's daughter made the game unique. Not every game has to be about destroying things. It's an entire

lifetime you're living and the dancing is a way of bringing life to the character."

"You could spend your entire life doing nothing," says Briggs. "The freedom to choose is entirely up to the player. But, we've given them a hell of a lot to think about and do if they choose. Again though, it's utterly free-roaming." And, picking up where *GTA* seems to have left off, there's a shipload of roaming to be done.

Meier's team has gone to extraordinary lengths to recreate the entire West Indies. Every island, islet, and land mass has been reproduced, from tiny Nevis to Barbados. "Compared to *Vice City*, we're big. Very big," Briggs tells us. "We've got the entire Caribbean, after all." It's a good job we've got an entire lifetime to explore it in then.

We'll be able to marry, make a career in the Royal Navy, spend our days in taverns, then sneak into enemy ports for a quick rendezvous with a mistress or two (there's the stealth), and discover ancient lost cities rich with jewels and treasures. We'll also be able to indulge in a little multiplayer ship-to-ship combat, a concept so simple yet so utterly addictive the only comparison we can draw is with *Mashed* (Issue 29, 8.6).

The game won't be playable over Xbox Live though, which is understandable. "This is a story about a single player," explains Meier. "To have Live play would have diluted that experience. It's such a rich world spanning so many genres and meaning so much to so many fans, we thought it best to tell the story of this pirate and do that to the best of our ability. This is our first console title, the Xbox is the best console for the job, and we want to nail it."

"The only way we could do *Pirates!* Live is to make it an MMORPG," Briggs says, which begs the question of whether we could be seeing *Pirates!* 2 on what the Firaxis team keeps referring to as Xenon (aka Xbox 2). "It's speculation, but yes," says Briggs, "it's certainly a possibility."

And other famous *Sid Meier*'s games such as *Civilization*? Will they be coming to Xbox if *Pirates!* is a success? A lot of nervous laughter and still we don't get a response. We dig a little deeper. "We'll put you on the pre-order list," laughs Meier.

Until then, we'll have plenty to chew over. With more than 20 hours of gameplay promised if we were to simply rush through the game, plus a stupidly wide range of genres to tackle, this generation of *Pirates!* could once again lay claim to the title of 'one of those rare games that manages to give something to everyone'.



↑ Impress her by strutting your funky stuff.



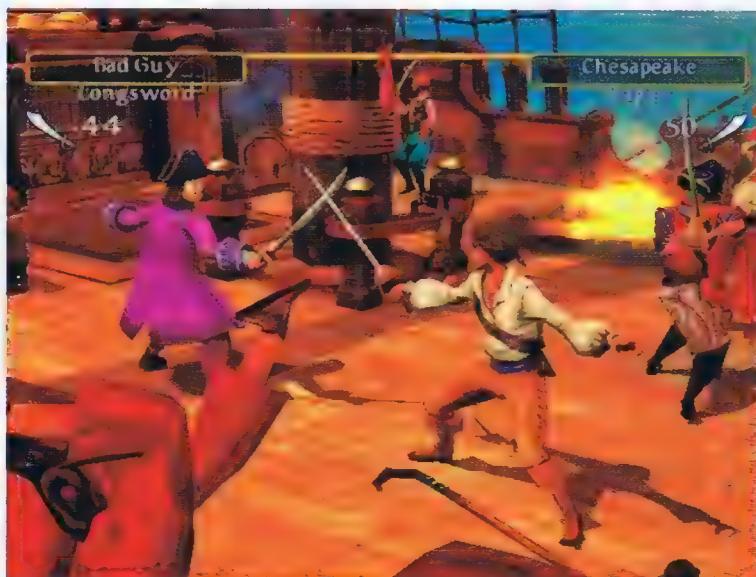
↑ Ship battles are intense, and amazing.



↑ Stealth aspects add more to *Pirates!*



↑ Visit every Caribbean island out there!

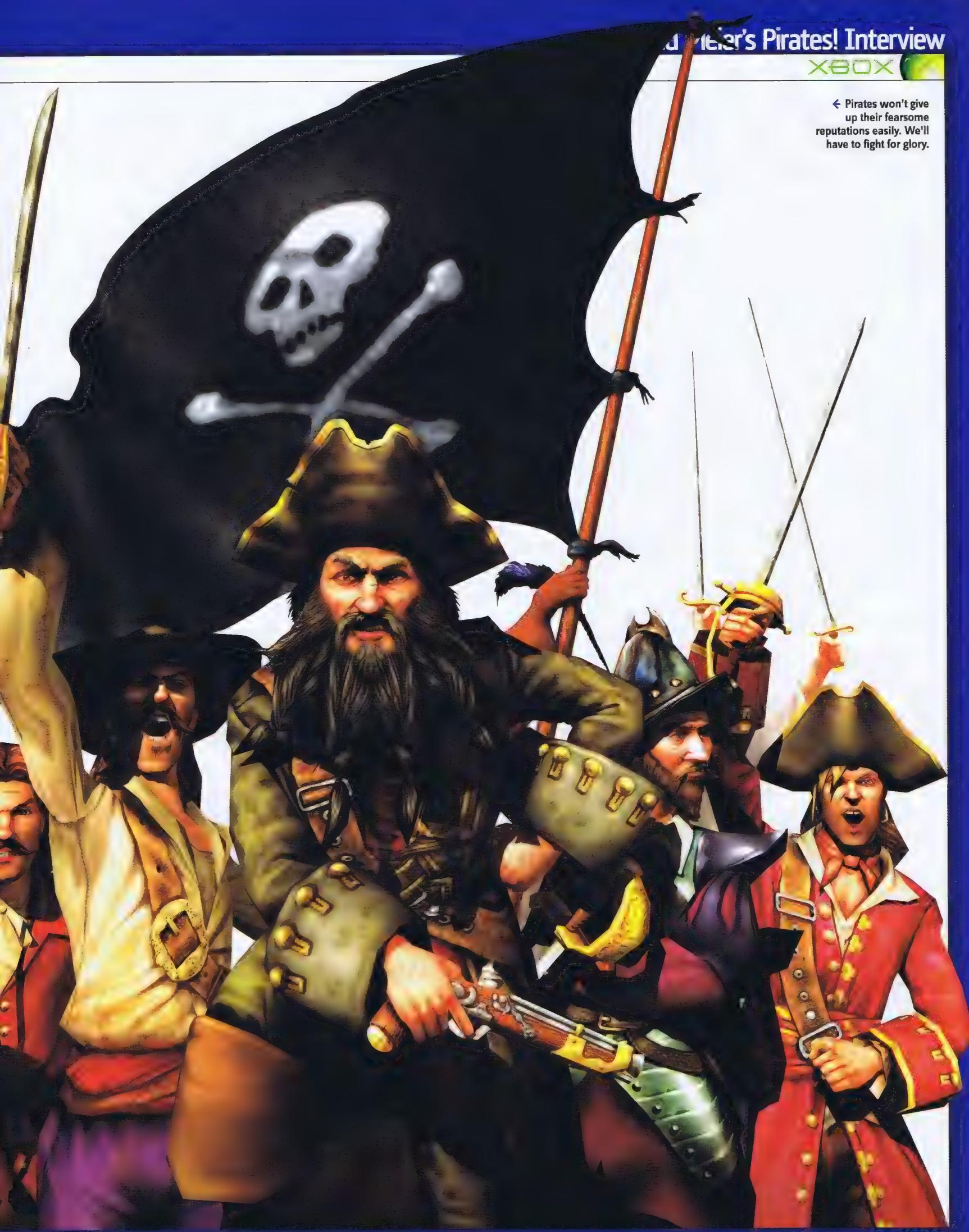


↑ To win a ship and booty we'll have to fight the captain. Beat him and the ship's ours.



↑ Get too cocky with the enemy and kiss your cutlass goodbye.

← Pirates won't give up their fearsome reputations easily. We'll have to fight for glory.



X-Media

 Latest DVD, Cinema, On-line and Music Edited by James Coffey

P042 X-DVD

It's the best of British this month. Don't say the 'Z' word.

P043 X-CINEMA

Tired of cops versus robbers? How about cops vs cops?

P043 X-TOYS

Too lazy to choose your own iPod tracks? Shuffle them!

P044 PHOTOSHOP PHUNNIES

Ripped from today's headlines, tasteless comedy!

P044 X-WEB

Are you keeping up with the Commodore? It's time you did.

P045 X-ANIME

Iou Yahsa is 1/2 man, 1/2 dog and his own best friend.

X-DVD



SHAUN OF THE DEAD

RRP \$34.95 RATING MA15+

ONE OF THE best zombie movies of this or any era, a rare gem of British cinema and a poignant comedy in its own right, *Shaun of the Dead* brings us the most engaging experience with the living dead you're likely to see this side of *Resident Evil* 4. Caught in a 20-something malaise, our reluctant hero's life runs through a deep rut between his

video games and his local pub. Shaun gets an unlikely new lease on life as zombies overrun London. He must escape the brain hungry hordes, prove himself a man, and win back his ex the only way he knows how - by holing up at the local. Innovative makeup and deft CG work complete the illusion of an everyday world going to hell.

Lucky for us, the film was made by people who not only understand the culture of gaming, they understand the importance of a solid DVD release. Thus we're treated to a lively commentary track, deleted and extended scenes, and even retro-actively story-boarded sequences explaining some of the implicit parts of the story, like how

Shaun led the zombies away from the Winchester, and how that zombie ended up in his shed. A pre-production sell-sheet sequence reveals some ideas that were dropped for timing and budgetary reasons, like blowing up the Jag in a gratuitous explosion. In short, this is a top edition of a cult classic, one to watch again & again.



BLAKES 7 SERIES 2

RRP \$99.95 RATING PG

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURES of the 30th century freedom fighter Blake, and his crew on the sleek starship the Liberator. Conceived by long-time *Dr. Who* writer Terry Nation, this classic sci-fi series still rocks thanks to its tense scripts and vivid characters. Forever matching wits with Blake are his treacherous 2nd

in command Avon, the decadent leader of the Terran forces, and Travis, the evil cyborg space commander bent on Blake's annihilation. The sets look cheap, and the 70s fashions are staggering, yet this still shines as a singular vision of epic television, wiping the floor with the likes of Firefly. Stacks of extras to boot.

THE LIFE OF BRIAN

RRP \$39.95 RATING M15+

"THEY THINK I'M the Messiah, Mum!" Finally, we're treated to a special edition of this fractured, irreverent, and very funny take on the life of Christ. Created by the Monty Python crew, it's the story of a young resident of Judea who's repeatedly mistaken for the savior of the Jews. Hilarity ensues thanks to deadpan

commentary on medieval social standards, including stoning, gladiatorial combat and racism. The digitally remastered picture & sound lend new life to seldom used special effects like animation, cross-dressing and full-frontal nudity. Extras are limited to a doco from 1979 and a few trailers.



X-CINEMA



↑ "You think that's fire you're breathing?"

ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13

Another classic gets an involuntary re-tread

REMAKES FROM THE nineteen-seventies make up a relatively small proportion of movies at the theatres. It only seems like there's so many of them because at best they're pointless, and at their worst desecrate the memory of the original. A young John Carpenter's penchant for action, electronic music and siege drama defined the original, now remade with a decent budget and recognisable stars. The premise is much the same: a handful of cops and crooks are holed up in a decommissioned police station, desperately fending off attacks from murderous invaders. The resultant pressure cooker

atmosphere inflames the tension throughout.

Only this time it's not a pack of gang members whose passion for death borders on the religious; that sort of clear-cut good versus evil fare just doesn't interest Hollywood anymore. No, it's all about the enemy within, so instead we get corrupt cops trying to bust their way in to silence a gangster (Lawrence Fishburne). Plot holes lie on the ground as thick as the winter snow, as frequent and unpredictable violence punctuates inconsistent characterisation and profane dialogue. Perhaps on a par with the Dawn of the Dead

X-TOYS

BENQ FP785 LCD MONITOR

RRP \$799

THE BIGGEST STRENGTH of this slick LCD TV is its style - it looks right at home the well-appointed living room of any swinging bachelor pad. Its biggest weakness is the refresh rate: 25ms is just a tad slow for action gaming. Fortunately, much faster screens are available.



APPLE IPOD SHUFFLE

RRP \$150 (512MB) / \$229 (1GB)

WITHOUT A SCREEN, or an FM radio, or bells or whistles of any kind, the latest, smallest iPod faces stiff competition from rival flash players (and even memory keys). Ease of use is its biggest selling point, even if its randomisation tends to favour certain tracks.

X-AUDIO

COURTESY OF SHOCK RECORDS



STATIC REVENGER & SOLITAIRE TINTED BREAKS BEATS & MELODIES

HOT, FUNKY, AGITATED house music that relies on simple, energetic beats and occasional catches of melody. Echoes of the first wave of disco blend seamlessly into the swift-moving mélange of contemporary electronica, not unlike a 33 1/3 Daft Punk record being played at 45. Consistent, competent dance: so old it's new.



HED PE ONLY IN AMERIKA

INTERESTING BLEND OF two music genres built on the importance of being hard-core: Rap and Metal. Wailing against corporations, television, and the music industry, this is intentionally jarring, sweary, naughty stuff. Angry, yet off-putting, the weakness of this format is its inherent unoriginality; this sounds a little too 20th century, if you follow.



IAN VAN DAHL INSPIRATION

THE STRENGTH OF these electronic beats is strangely reminiscent of Japanese curry - a completely homogenised product, lacking intensity and only hinting at its origins through its taste. The odd thing is, like steaming hot Katsu-Curry, this mix of plaintive female vocals and bowstring electro pluckery is strangely irresistible.



A STUDIO SOS

IMAGINE THAT SOME heuristic, mammoth mainframe of the movies, like WOPR or HAL, had been exposed to brief samples of Ya Kid K and Michael Jackson, then ordered to splice their musical styles into a single for contemporary audiences. Squeaky, vaguely urban songs are the result, given the obligatory drum machine.

X-WEB



GAME HIPPO

www.gamehippo.com

DID YOU KNOW: Hippos kill far more people every year than any other form of African wildlife. While they may look all chubby and cute in their water holes, their chomping jaws are filled with dagger-like teeth. They are hungry, hungry beasts indeed, and the perfect mascot for a massive site filled with freeware. That's right, games that are completely free to download. Many are rubbish, of course, but thanks to a built-in rating system it's easy to steer your browser towards some of the finer titles available. Like the retro-styled space RTS Gate 88, for instance. Browse, and by all means, gorge.



C64.COM

www.c64.com

IT'S AMAZING TO think that there are kids growing up these days who don't know what a Commodore 64 is. The brown, chunky wedge of plastic had numerous design flaws, 16 colour graphics, and a whopping 64 K of RAM. Its technical specs gave it around one thousandth the power of your Xbox, and the loading times were a shocker, too. Ever tried to load a game off an audio tape? It ain't pretty. So why did it capture so many gamers imaginations? The C64 presided over a decade-long reign of innovative game design. Download an emulator and see for yourself, assuming those chunky pixels don't blind your eyes.



BLINK-O-RAMA

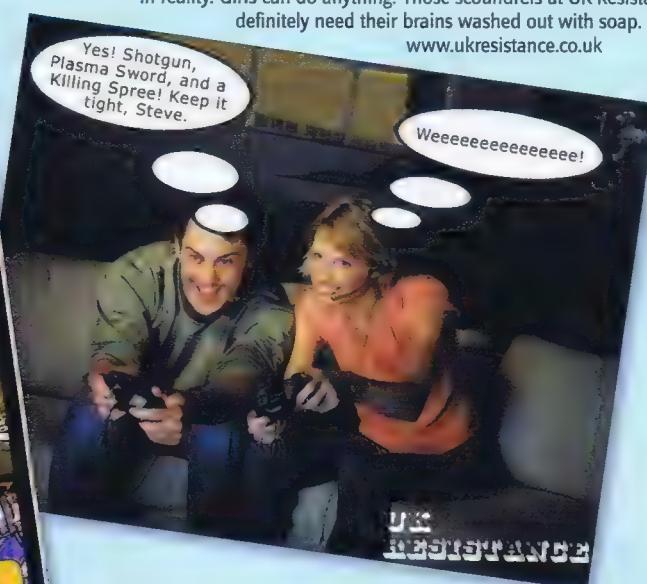
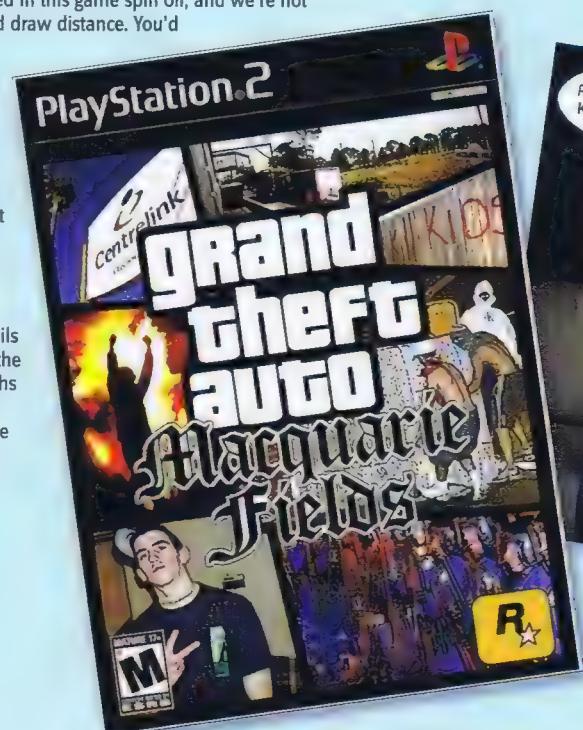
blinkorama.blogspot.com

EVERYBODY DOES IT. Yet we give it so little thought, the act of blinking. A huge block of time in our lives is dedicated to keeping our eyeballs moist; an act that can have the most spectacular consequences for those in the public eye. Blinkorama captures big-shot celebrities at their most vulnerable, during those fractured moments when their eyeball moistening is caught in film, forever available for freeze-framing, for scrutiny, for keeps. Sure, it humiliates, but the effect also humanises. Suddenly, these talking heads are people too, individuals whose lives can't be all that different to our own. "Cut me, do I not bleed?" etc.

X-PHOTOSHOP PHUNNIES

GRAND THEFT AUTO: MACQUARIE FIELDS

IT'S TASTELESS, AND that's why it's funny. Frankly, the whole "gangsta" vibe has never really sat well in Australia's suburban landscape. We have it so easy, you almost have to make a determined effort to lead a sub-humanoid existence. The gameplay options would be fairly limited in this game spin off, and we're not just talking loading times and draw distance. You'd have the option of stealing a car, at which point the siren level would jump straight to four stars. Then you'd call in your posse for hours of relatively uneventful belligerence, occasionally concussing a riot cop with a crudely thrown missile. Not exactly gripping stuff, huh? Just think of the soundtrack - ever heard any Aussie hip-hop? Like fingernails on a blackboard. We expect the Xbox version of this six months down the track. Cheers, to Mitchell Koo for the heads up on this one.

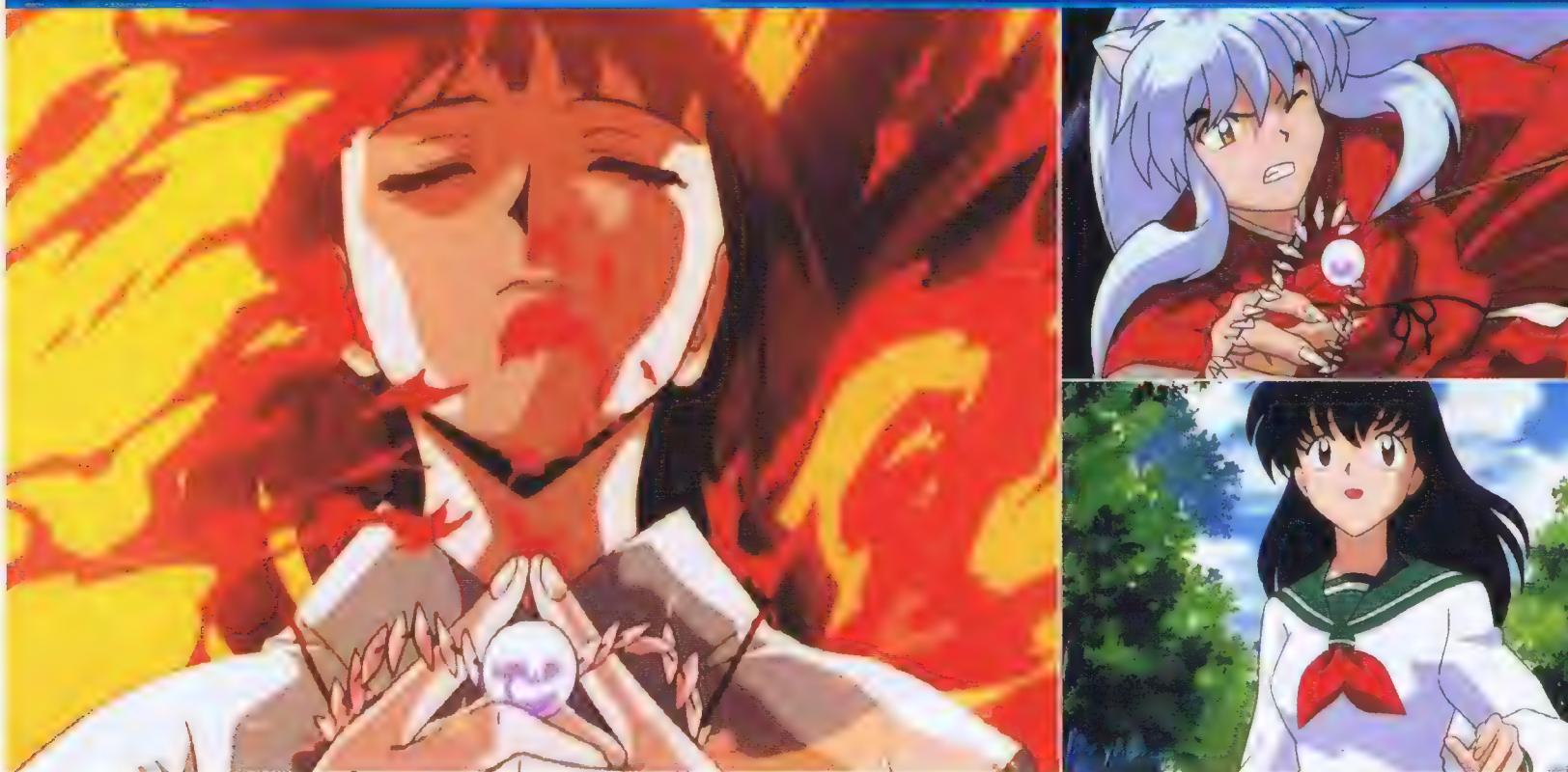


WEEEEEEE!

SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT IS still strongly divided on the issue of comparing male and female brains, and divining how they really work. The latest research suggests that males favour the use of grey matter, while females use their white matter more, resulting in comparable overall performance, albeit with highly defined areas of specialisation. This deftly modified PR photo from 3rd Party peripheral manufacturer Plantronics would suggest that, for example, boys might be better than girls at *Halo 2*. This is, of course, an offensive stereotype with no basis in reality. Girls can do anything. Those scoundrels at UK Resistance definitely need their brains washed out with soap.

www.ukresistance.co.uk

EVERY MONTH, WE scour cyberspace for the latest in photo-manipulated videogame humour. If you find a picture worthy of *Photoshop Phunnies*, or better yet, if you've made one yourself, send it to us at staff@oxm.com.au with the subject "Photoshop Phunnies", and you could see your name featured in Australia's *Official Xbox Magazine*.

X-ANIME**INU YASHA****RRP \$24.95 RATING PG**

CREATED BY RUMIKO "Ranma 1/2" Takahashi, this is one of the longest-running and most popular anime series in the world today. Inu Yasha is a young demon/human half breed on a quest for a magical jewel in the days of feudal Japan. Entangled in his adventures is a modern-day schoolgirl who's

traveled back in time by falling through a magic well. Plot tension stems from her being the reincarnation of a priestess who tried kill Inu Yasha in her previous life. Eccentric, super-powered friends and foes complicate things further, as romance, slapstick and extreme violence collide.

While the TV grade animation is sparingly used, the real strength of this show is the characterisation. Likeable scallywags interact in an ongoing, almost soap-opera like story. Playing fast and loose with not only history but mythology allows for endlessly imaginative twists, as Kagome's

archery and Inu Yasha's swordplay triumph over all adversity. It's addictive stuff, so it's little wonder this show has made its way into the cult "Adult Swim" animation block in the US. We're also treated to some improvements over the US edition, like four rather than three episodes per volume.

SAMURAI CHAMPOO**RRP \$29.95 RATING M15+**

FROM SHINICHIRO WATANABE - the director of *Cowboy Bebop* - comes an offbeat samurai yarn. The setting is patently anachronistic (modern eyeglasses, social mores, figures of speech, etc), a fact rammed home by the ever-present soundtrack of contemporary Japanese hip-hop. Thus this is not a show

about realism, but attitude, as two mismatched swordsmen and the young woman they're sworn to protect follow a quixotic course through the bloodied corpses of anyone who gets in their way. Nicely presented, with dynamic fight scenes and edgy pacing, it turns cliche lemons into post-modern lemonade.

**PARANOIA AGENT****RRP \$29.95 RATING M15+**

SATOSHI KON IS shaping up to be quite an force in anime. After directing the Hitchcockesque *Perfect Blue*, the whimsical *Millennium Actress* and the grotty *Tokyo Godfathers*, he's found a genre that suits him perfectly: psychological horror. This thirteen episode series delves into the lives of a

cross-section of city dwellers who are being assaulted by a pint-sized inline-skating phantom, the enigmatic "Lil' Slugger." Whether he's real, or some kind of collective delusion is but one of the many mind games *Paranoia Agent* plays with your expectations. A show that is unforgettable, and deeply unsettling.

Charts

The ten best-selling games in Australia

**1**

KOTOR 2: THE SITH LORDS

Dev: Obsidian
Pub: Lucasarts

The sequel to 2003's Game of the Year makes an impressive debut on this month's charts, spreading the Dark Side to all and sending the Master Chief to second place.

**2**

HALO 2

Dev: Bungie Pub: Microsoft

MC stands solid at number 2, ceding the top spot to the mighty Knights of the Old Republic 2. For now. Let's see if the trend continues.

**3**

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2

Dev: EA Pub: EA

NFSU2 was number one last month, but it couldn't hold back the combined might of *Halo 2* and *Knights of the Old Republic 2*.

**4**

FABLE

Dev: Lionhead Pub: Microsoft

One of the fastest-selling Xbox games of 2004 is still going strong in 2005. We predicted its time in the chart was ending but we were wrong. D'oh!

**5**

MECHASSAULT 2: LONE WOLF

Dev: Day One Studios Pub: Microsoft

More of the same in single-player, but it's the multiplayer modes that everyone's coming back for. Mech-jacking people can be really funny.

**6**

THE INCREDIBLES

Dev: Heavy Iron Pub: THQ

The movie's won an Oscar for best animated film - not that it has anything to do with the game. It's a bit easy to play, but perfect for younger gamers.

**7**

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005

Dev: EA Pub: EA

It seems golf is the choice of sport this time of the year. Well, not that we have a lot of choice. If we had a choice, we'd be playing a cricket game.

**8**

V8 SUPERCARS 2

Dev: Codemasters Pub: Codemasters

V8 Supercars 2 returns to the top-sellers charts, just in time before the mad rush of other quality racers come rushing in (like *Forza*).

**9**

SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS MOVIE

Dev: Heavy Iron Pub: THQ

Attention all right-wing conservative bible-thumpers: SPONGEBOB IS NOT GAY. He is a sponge. He has no reproductive organs.

**10**

GTA TWIN PACK

Dev: Rockstar Pub: Take 2 Interactive

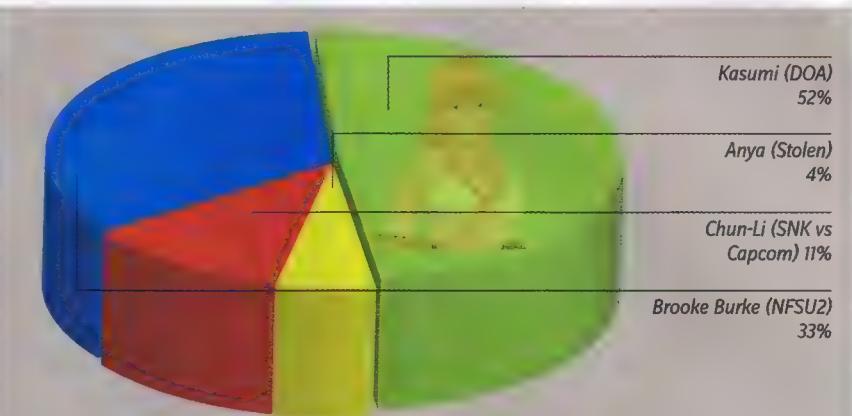
Well, if you can't wait for *San Andreas* to come to your Xbox, buy the next best thing - the *GTA Twin Pack*. It's two huge games for the price of one!



The hot topic

You answer the burning question...

Who is the hottest female character on Xbox?



It comes as no surprise that your favourite videogame babe is Kasumi from *DOA*. Anya from *Stolen* and Chun-Li performed badly, but the lovely Brooke Burke was right in contention. Don't forget to play this month's demo of *SVC Chaos: SNK Vs Capcom*, starring the (not so) hot Chun Li.

TO VOTE ON the hot topic, visit the OXM forum at www.derwenthoward.com.au and post in any of the hot topics and polls you'll find in the threads there.

Your most wanted



THIS CHART IS composed entirely from the entries you send in and shows the upcoming games you're most excited by. We can then fill the mag with the news, previews and features you most want to see!

**1**

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

Dev: Rockstar North Pub: Rockstar Release: June 2005

2

DOOM 3

Dev: Vicarious Visions/id Pub: Activision Release: April 2005

3

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY

Dev: Ubisoft Montreal Pub: Ubisoft Release: March 2005

4

HALF-LIFE 2

Dev: Valve Software Pub: Vivendi Universal Release: TBA 2005

5

FORZA MOTORSPORT

Dev: Microsoft Pub: Microsoft Release: May 2005

6

UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2: THE LIANDRI CONFLICT

Dev: Epic Games Pub: Midway Release: April 2005

7

DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN

Dev: Novologic Pub: Climax Release: April 2005

8

PARIAH

Dev: Digital Extremes Pub: Hip Games Release: May 2005

9

BROTHERS IN ARMS ROAD TO HILL 30

Dev: Gearbox Software Pub: Ubisoft Release: March 2005

10

JADE EMPIRE

Dev: BioWare Pub: Microsoft Release: April/May 2005

OUR SHOUT



Make sure you try this month's unbelievable trial version on the Game Disc. The graphics are to die for! Full review on page 058!

Xbox Game Releases

The forthcoming games you need to know about

DATE	GAME	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	ISSUE
Autumn 05	25 To Life	Avalanche	Eidos	N/A
	Advent Rising	Majesco	Vivendi Univ.	20
	Area 51	Midway	Midway	29
	Championship Manager 5	Gusto Games	Eidos	N/A
	Close Combat: First to Fight	Destineer	Take-Two	31
	Commandos Strike Force	Pyro	Eidos	36
	Conspiracy: Weapons of Mass Destruction	Kuju	Oxygen Int.	N/A
	CT Special Forces: Fire For Effect	Light & Shadow Pr.	Hip Interactive	N/A
	Delta Force: Black Hawk Down	Novalogic	Climax	30
	Destroy All Humans	Pandemic	THQ	33
	Forza Motorsport	Microsoft	Microsoft	31
	Get On Da Mic	Eidos	Eidos	N/A
	Gungriffon	Kama	Tecmo	N/A
	Jade Empire	BioWare	Microsoft	31
	Kao The Kangaroo: Round 2	JoWooD	JoWooD	N/A
	King of Fighters 2003/2004	SNK	SNK	N/A
	Lego Star Wars	Giant	Eidos	38
	Mashed Fully Loaded	Supersonic	Empire	39
	Medal of Honor: Dogs of War	EA	EA	39
	Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	Rockstar	39
	NARC	Midway	Midway	28
	Notorious: Die to Drive	Ubisoft	Ubisoft	N/A
	Pariah	Digital Extremes	Hip Interactive	39
	Pure Pinball	Iridon	Iridon	33
	Red Ninja: End of Honour	Tranji	Vivendi Univ.	33
	SCAR - Squadra Corse Alfa Romeo	Milestone	Black Bean	N/A
	Scarfase	Radical Games	Vivendi Univ.	34
	Starcraft: Ghost	Blizzard	Vivendi Univ.	23
	Super Monkey Ball Deluxe	Sega	Sega	38
	Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams	Avalanche Software	THQ	N/A
	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Chaos Theory	Ubisoft	Ubisoft	39
	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Sbc: Lockdown	Ubisoft Montreal	Ubisoft	37
	Torque	Garage Games	JoWooD	N/A
	World Championship Snooker 2005	Blade Interactive	Sega	N/A
Winter 05	100 Bullets	TBA	TBA	32
	Alien Hominid	The Behemoth	Zoo Digital	39
	ATV Quad Power Racing 3	Climax	TBA	N/A
	Aquanox	TBA	JoWooD	N/A
	Batman Begins	Eurocom	EA	37
	Battlefield: Modern Conflict	EA	EA	N/A
	Battlestations: Midway	Mithis	SCI	34
	Brian Lara International Cricket	Codemasters	Codemasters	40
	Call of Cthulhu	TBA	Headfirst	32
	Cold Winter	Swordfish Stu.	Vivendi Univ.	N/A
	Conker: Live & Reloaded	Rare	Microsoft	37
	Dancing Stage Fusion	Konami	Konami	N/A
	Darkwatch	Sammy	Sammy	N/A
	Dead to Rights 2: Hell to Pay	Namco	Namco	36
	Dragonball Z: Sagas	Atari	Atari	N/A
	Emergency Mayhem	TBA	TBA	30
	Fahrenheit	Quantic Dream	Vivendi Univ.	18
	Freedom Fighters 2	IO Interactive	EA	N/A
	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	Rockstar North	Rockstar	39
	Half-Life 2	Valve	Vivendi Univ.	32
	Hitman: Blood Money	IO Interactive	Eidos	37
	Iron Phoenix	Sammy	Sammy	N/A
	Juiced	Juiced Games	THQ	35
	Justice League	Trav. Tales	Midway	N/A
	Madagascar	Toys for Bob	Activision	39
	Metal Slug 4 & 5	SNK	SNK	N/A
	Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks	Midway	Midway	37
	MotoGP: Ultimate Racing Technology 3	Climax	THQ	40
	MX Vs ATV Unleashed	THQ	THQ	36
	Painkiller	Dreamcatcher	Mindscape	N/A
	Predator: Concrete Jungle	Eurocom	Vivendi Univ.	32
	Psychonauts	Double Fine	Microsoft	6
	Raze's Hell	Artech	Majesco	N/A
	Rogue Trooper	SCI	SCI	34
	Robots	Eurocom	Vivendi Univ.	N/A
	Sid Meier's Pirates!	Firaxis	Atari	40

THE WISH LIST

DESPITE providing the most detailed release schedule around, we all know game release dates change quicker than Andy's hairstyle. Tell us what you're waiting for - send your top five to staff@oxm.com.au.



WE'RE MORE than intrigued by *TimeShift*, Atari's upcoming FPS. Its last few shooters have used a really nice engine, and the thought of combining this with some innovative time-travel powers has got us winding our watches forward in anticipation.



WITH IMPROVED handling, stunning visuals and more bikes than you could shake a throttle stick at, we can't wait to pull on our biking leathers and take out *MotoGP: URT3*. For a definitive first look at this roaring racer, check out our Exclusive Access on page 052.

DATE	GAME	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	ISSUE
Spring 05	Sniper Elite	Rebellion	TBA	12
	Spikeout: Battle Street	Sega	Sega	36
	Stacked with Daniel Negreanu	5000ft, Inc	Myelin Media	N/A
	Star Wars Episode III	LucasArts	LucasArts	40
	Stolen	Hip Interactive	TBA	33
	The Incredible Hulk	Radical	Vivendi Univ.	N/A
	The Movies	Lionhead	Activation	16
	The Roots	Cenega	Cenega	29
	Tori	Tiwalk	Ubisoft	4
	Trivial Pursuit: Unhinged	Artech	Atari	25
	Worms 4: Mayhem	Codemasters	Codemasters	39
	WWE Wrestlemania 21	THQ	TBA	N/A
	Beat Down: Fists of Vengeance	Capcom	Capcom	N/A
	Fear & Respect	Midway	Midway	38
	Scooby-Doo! Unmasked	Warner Bros	THQ	N/A
	Stargate SG-1: The Alliance	Perception	JoWooD	38
	The Godfather	EA	EA	40
	TimeShift	Saber Interactive	Atari	39
	Without Warning	Circle Studios	Capcom	40
Summer 05	American McGee's Oz	Carbon6	TBA	27
	Armada 2	TBA	Metro	4
	Big Mutha Truckers 2	Empire	Empire	40
	BloodRayne 2	Majesco	TBA	36
	Breed	Brat Designs	CDV	N/A
	Chronos	Saber 3D	TBA	N/A
	Dead or Alive 4: Code Cronus	Tecmo	Microsoft	N/A
	Dealer	Nagual	TBA	N/A
	Duality	Trilobite Gr.	Phantogram	4
	Fuel	Firetoad Software	Dreamcatcher	N/A
	FX Racing	Milestone	TBA	23
	Johnny Whatever	Warthog	TBA	N/A
	Kameo: Elements of Power	Rare	Microsoft	33
	Karaoke Revolution 3	Konami	Harmonix	N/A
	King Kong	Ubisoft Montreal	Ubisoft	36
	Loose Cannon	Digital Anvil	Ubisoft	4
	Magatama	Microsoft	Microsoft	23
	Masters of the Universe	Savage	TDK	N/A
	Neverend	Mayhem	TBA	N/A
	Nightmare Creatures 3	Ubisoft	Ubisoft	N/A
	Perfect Dark Zero	Rare	Microsoft	10
	Phantom Dust	Microsoft	Microsoft	23
	Pilot Down	Wide Games	Wanadoo	N/A
	Phoenix	Bungie	Microsoft	37
	Resident Evil 4	Capcom	Capcom	37
	Roll Call	TBA	SCI	35
	Quake IV	Raven Soft.	Activation	N/A
	Serious Sam 2	Croteam	Take-Two	21
	Starship Troopers	Empire	Empire	27
	Starsky & Hutch 2	Empire	LucasArts	36
	Star Wars Battlefront 2	Pandemic	BAM!	38
	State of Emergency 2	VIS	Namco	N/A
	Street Racing Syndicate	Eutechnyx	Namco	N/A
	Stubbs the Zombie Rebel Without a Pulse	Wideload Games	Microsoft	37
	Survivor	Replay Studios	TBA	36
	The Fast and the Furious	Genki	Vivendi Univ.	N/A
	The Last Job	TBA	TBA	N/A
	The Red Star	Chris. Gossetti	TBA	32
	True Crime 2	Luxoflux	Activation	N/A
	War Devil	Sammy	TBA	N/A
	X2: The Return	Egosoft	Deep Silver	37
	BC	Intrepid Ent.	Microsoft	31
	Burnout 4	Criterion	EA	36
	Fantastic Four	TBA	Activation	40
	Ford Mustang 40th Anniversary Edition	Take-Two	Take-Two	N/A
	Just Cause	Avalanche Software	Eidos	N/A
	London Taxi	Data Design	TBA	38
	Spider-Man Ultimate	TBA	Activation	N/A
	The Mummy: The Animated Series	Hip	Hip	N/A
	World Racing 2	TDK	TDK	N/A
	X-Men Legends 2	TBA	Activation	N/A

XBOX CLASSICS

The latest and best of the value range



Tom Clancy's
Ghost Recon
Issue 09
Score 8.3



Mortal Kombat:
Deadly Alliance
Issue 12
Score 8.8



Harry Potter and
the Prisoner of
Azkaban
Issue 30
Score 7.4



TimeSplitters 2
Issue 09
Score 9.3

AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE: THE OWN TEAM WERE LIVID AFTER A STRATEGY DAY SCUPPERED THEIR CHANCES TO GO TO NEW YORK ON THE GODFATHER PRESS TRIP. ONE OF OUR LUCKY FREELANCERS WENT INSTEAD.

Inbox



Letters 40 Editor

KEVIN CHEUNG

AMBER OF CHINESE UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2

Another bumper crop of interesting thoughts (gaming tramps), strange inventions (Master Chief), and general rants have once again kept the OXM post bag overflowing. Keep them coming!

BUM FIGHT!

I have spent most of my 16-year existence enjoying the luxury of computer games, but even they can't help me forget those less fortunate than ourselves who cannot afford consoles, televisions or even homes. I can bet there are a few amongst the homeless with an itchy trigger finger begging to show the Covenant that even the tramps can be a force to be reckoned with. So remember, next time you see a beggar, don't give him your spare change, instead invite him home with you and let him unleash his homeless rage on the Covenant forces as he splatters their purple paste all over the walls. It would bring him more satisfaction than a Happy Meal from McDonalds, admit it. Admit it!

Laiithe Selman, via email

That age old argument of essential sustenance versus leisure activity, eh?! Many a time we've been set upon by urine-soaked panhandlers harassing us for a spare multiplayer deathmatch. Many a time we've pushed them away, only later to reflect on the error of our ways. Maybe we could have offered them a joypad instead of a few coppers and invited them home to sit cross-legged on the living room floor to bark at the anaglypta and insult the dog. Tell you what Laiithe, you send us a picture



↓ This or a *Halo 2* match? What a choice!



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POST ON THE FORUM
You can find it at www.derwenthoward.com.au



EMAIL US WITH your rants,
hopes and opinions at
staff@oxm.com.au

YOUR OPINIONS COUNT! Your input here has a direct effect on the content of your Official Xbox Magazine, so let us know which games you like or don't like, what you want to see more of or less of in the mag, or just rant by text, mail, forum or email!



↑ Too short? We think not. Try replaying it for the good and bad endings!

of a tramp at your house ignoring a slap-up roast dinner in favour of a three-hour session of *Bad Boys: Miami Takedown* and we'll follow your lead. Or get some work experience handing out *The Big Issue*.

TOO SHORT OR TOO GOOD?

Since finishing KOTOR 2, it's occurred to me that games are becoming too short for our enjoyment. Or are we that fast in finishing them? I think replay value is dropping. People play the game, finish it within a few days, have a whinge, then buy a new game, finish it within a few days... it's a vicious circle indeed. That's why I am asking you - what do you think?

Are games getting shorter and shorter by the minute? Or are we just so bored that we sit around and play them for several hours at a time? I still remember the good ol' days with the Super Nintendo. It took me about a whole month of playing to complete a game that I was into, not that you're interested in that. Lend me your insight into this problem.

Scotterz

Games aren't getting shorter. What's changed is people's expectations and the way they play games. Before *Final Fantasy VII* generated big publicity for requiring over 70 hours to finish it, nobody cared how long a game was as long as it was a satisfying experience. Every game has a beginning and an end. Whether that game had a long narrative, enough secret items to warrant several replays, or simply looped back to the beginning and restarted at a faster pace, one's enjoyment shouldn't be measured in hours and minutes. That being said, many people choose to forego sleep, work and meal-times to play games. Is it any surprise they finish games faster?

NEXT-GEN NO-NO?

Shut up talking about next-gen consoles or forever be damned as some foolish consumer who falls for all the latest marketing tag lines the big companies use! The next batch of consoles are not 'next generation'. Nope. They aren't going to give us anything remarkably new, just more polished versions of what we have now. The last true next-generation leap in gaming was the leap into 3D. If I

STAR LETTER

* Send small mail to Official Australian Xbox Magazine, PO Box 1037, Bondi Junction, NSW 1355; or email us at: staff@oxm.com.au. Thanks to Microsoft, the writer of the Star Letter gets a copy of *Halo 2*.



LIVE ALIVE-O!

We're writing due to your apparent lack of research when it comes to Live games. We were overjoyed with your review which confirmed our suspicions that PES4 would be the greatest soccer game on Earth! But this review convinced us that you have not tested it online as it is plagued with appalling lag! Konami is now releasing a patch but it shouldn't have released it in the first place with these problems and you should have been lobbying them on our behalf! Why create the best game if the online engine cannot support the best?

Another example is *Star Wars: Battlefront* - the lag is awful and you can't even have a clear conversation with a friend due to the distortion. I know it's quiet in space but this is ridiculous! Do you not realise the role you play as the Official Xbox Magazine? We need you to tell it like it is! If a game suffers a poor Live review then maybe game companies will sort out patches quicker. The truth also reminds us that you are on our side and not just paying lip service to powerful companies. Sort it out because your Live section is spoiling a good and useful read.

Jasen Warner (Optimus Jay) and Nick Smith (maximus nick), via email

We always give honest, impartial advice with our Live reviews (the fantastic *Burnout 3* sucks online for instance), but this is a case of not being able to please all of the people all of the time. We test Live games using retail copies against real gamers over a standard Xbox Live setup, just as you would play the game online. We can't test the game over every variety of broadband option and can only comment on our own Live experience. If a game runs without lag on our setup then it means that the Live aspect is working well (at the time of review) and if your experience varies it's probably due to your broadband provider or network setup. When Live problems do occur, such as the PES4 cheating problem, we're onto the companies as soon as possible (check out Issue 37, page 022 to see we were on Konami's case) and where we experience bad lag we always state so.



↓ If your game is slow, don't blame Live!



Forum Shorts

I was wondering why we don't seem to have access to the high def pack in Australia? Is it because of our lower population? 480i component would still be better than s-video so why don't they sell it rather than the advanced av pack?

mouse a death

It's a subject we covered back in Issue 02 - high definition video output was disabled in all PAL territories at the last minute. We were never given a straight answer, but we suspect it's because the format for a fixed high-definition output hadn't been determined for PAL yet. Right now, S-Video is the best that's available.

What's going to happen to the mag when the Xbox 2 is released? Are Xbox games going to be just dropped from the mag?

snafu

Drop Xbox games from the mag? Good heavens no... Xbox 2 hasn't even been formally confirmed yet anyway, so it's much too early for us to say what will happen.



↑ Tairrie prepares to jump Max.

god damn we need more pages and the mag needs to be funnier cause when im grounded i spend most of the time reading cause i can't play my xbox.

darkelf20

We think your message is kind of funny. Does that count?

I've seen some ads on hotmail saying that Halo was being released on Nokia N-Gage. Is this true?

Masong cheef

Er... wasn't this rumour killed off over a year ago? And who actually owns one of those things?

WHY!!!! why do these people insist on making newer and newer things JUST as i get a grasp on the current technology? I know im not the only person suffering with this. remember dial up? remember you were really cool if u had a second phone line installed = 24/7 internet!! that was awesome if u played ultima like i did and u could just macro all night. I JUST!!! got the new line installed and i was ready to poon some! I'm a moggie - half man, half dog. I'm my own best friend. with my warrior... BANG "adsl has arrived" and im again on the chase for bigger and better things.

Craven

Well, if things didn't improve, we'd still be in the Stone Age. [Note, Craven's letter reads like it was written by a madman because of the new language filter on our forum - Ed.]

finishing KOTOR 2 for me took me 45 hours ugh... It was worth it though.

Leon

Tell that to Scotters.

was to say I was going to release a next-generation car, what would you expect? A revolutionary new fuel system? The ability to fly?

Er... no. It'll go faster and be a bit cooler. Not really next gen is it? So, please, shut up about the next-gen consoles. You are only making yourselves look like the consumer idiots some marketing bloke in a suit has hoped to snare.

Sabotage, via email

So, in effect, you're saying your parents were a whole rung further down the evolutionary ladder, is that right? I mean, you're not so radically different from them are you? Just ever so slightly, almost indistinguishably more evolved, yet you are the next generation. Just as Xbox 2 will be the next generation. There will be no doubting it. When Xbox 2 arrives it truly will be a next-gen console. Trust us.

ANGRY FROM HARTLEPOOL

Why isn't there a National Xbox Week? I mean, who cares about National How To Put On A Condom Week? They

↓ Mooster Chief. A little too much free time, SD Smith?

UDDERLY RIDICULOUS

Want to know what Bungie was really going to reveal to the world on 09 February? Look no further my friends, the answer is right here. My sources deep inside the gaming giant have leaked me the info that Master Chief was supposed to die on his way back to Earth and get replaced in *Halo 3* by the Mooster Chief. Mooster Chief's secret weapons were her lovely udders on which the Covenant are forced to suckle on until they asphyxiate. So there you are.

SD Smith, via email

Thank goodness for that! Here's us getting into a pickle about the future of the *Halo* franchise and, as we suspected, Master Chief gets killed off and replaced by a udder-toting bovine.

RED LETTER DAY

As I was playing *Fable*, I noticed that I had three wives. This was odd, because I thought I had only had one wedding. I checked my stats; it said my number of spouses was three, the number of weddings was one, the number of people fallen in love with me was seven (three of which male), and the number of divorces was zero. I can't make any sense of it. Oh, and I have killed 50 guards and 16 unpaid fines. So is it impossible for me to enter town without being run at by guards?

Luke Borwell, email

Not many of us wake up to find we've got three wives, but the little things such as unpaid fines, dubious 'drunk love' and being banned from public places that we all encounter from day to day just proves that *Fable* is more of a life sim than we could have imagined. There's just one thing you've neglected to do: hit the bottle.



↑ Luke Borwell has three wives, but where the hell did they come from?

The OXM team

What we've been up to this month



KEVIN CHEUNG // EDITOR



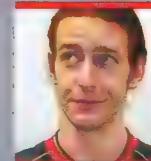
JAMES COTTEE // ASSOCIATE-EDITOR

JAMES HELD a party last weekend, but the mood was spoiled by his neighbour's pesky cat, which was projectile-vomiting poo from its mouth.

NOW PLAYING: *Chaos Theory, UC2, Forza*
FAVE SPY GADGET: Jaws' teeth



MATT WOLFS // TECH EDITOR



DAN TOOSE // WRITER

MATT'S BEEN beavering away at the latest 2D fighting games on Xbox, showing off his big combos to anyone who'll listen.

NOW PLAYING: *KOF, SVC Chaos*
FAVE SPY GADGET: Bond's vibrating ring



RALPH PANBIANCO // WRITER



BEN TALBOT // PRODUCER

RALPH WAS late for his deadlines this issue, citing exploding laptops and cancelled international flights from China.

NOW PLAYING: *Playboy, Tak 2*
FAVE SPY GADGET: Solid Snake's cardboard box



ANDY IRVING // STAFF WRITER



PAUL COOK // ART DIRECTOR

ANDY went to see *The Lion King* - a late Christmas gift from his beloved. Still, saves her buying him a Valentine's gift as well, doesn't it?

NOW PLAYING: *UC2, Snowblind, FIFA Street*
FAVE SPY GADGET: Shoes with knives

FOR THE first time ever, Cookie revealed that he owns at least one long-sleeved shirt with a collar. We were stunned at not being able to see his arms.

NOW PLAYING: *The annoying new scanner*
FAVE SPY GADGET: Bond's magnetic watch

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OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN XBOX MAGAZINE DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR FOR LESS!

XBOX

Extreme mode races will range from the narrow streets of Tokyo to the dusty roads of Qatar.

ONLY ON XBOX



MotoGP Ultimate Racing Technology 3

Climax wheels its third MotoGP game out of the pits

Words: Martin Korda

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dev: Climax	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pub: THQ
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Players: 1; Split TBA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Live: players TBA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Release: Winter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Players: S. Link TBA
www.climaxgroup.com	

IT'S NOT EASY making a great motorbike game, you know. See, the main stumbling block is that age-old problem of finding the right balance between realism and fun, something that's made all the harder by the fact that, unlike in a four-wheeled racing game, there's the chance that you can actually fall off your vehicle... regularly. And let's face it, for most of us, that's about as much fun as exfoliating with a cheese grater. While bathing in vinegar. After you've been flayed.

So just how do you find a middle ground - one that will sate the petrol-head biker with skin-free knees who demands extreme realism, as well as the uncoordinated masses who just want to stick to the road like glue while holding down the accelerator button, and everyone in-between? Well, Nottingham-based developer Climax believes it has the answer with the third game in its excellent MotoGP series. So, eager to find out for ourselves whether the

team had found the magic formula, we rolled up to Nottingham to speak with Climax and get our leathery hands on the latest version of the game.

Perhaps the most striking thing about Climax's approach to developing *MotoGP 3* is its determination to make this previously hardcore series more accessible to the average gamer, while staying true to its roots. "There've been two big schools of thought on what the fans want for *MotoGP 3*," explains Rik Alexander, the game director. "One side wants it to be more arcadey with less real-world physics, the other wants more of a simulation. Our feeling was to take it down the simulation route, but make sure we made it more accessible to newcomers. So we decided to go down a similar route to *Gran Turismo* that has the depth of a hardcore simulation, but is forgiving enough on the track to still be fun and accessible."

Climax's most major innovation has been to introduce a far wider and more balanced range of crotch rockets than before, each of which will be upgradable and fully customisable in *MotoGP 3*'s all-new Extreme gaming mode. Extreme mode will task you with winning money by competing against fictional riders over 16 imaginary courses - based in a variety of countries ranging from Japan to Qatar - >>



↑ The better you perform in the Extreme races, the more money you'll get to upgrade.

MESSING AROUND WITH BIKES

It's not just honeymooners who can get upgrades

IN MOTO GP 3's Extreme racing mode, you'll be able to customise your bike both technically and visually. There'll be five areas that you'll be able to upgrade: traction, stability, braking, weight reduction and brake horsepower. You'll also have a wide variety of liveries to choose from – which will themselves be fully customisable – including a very swanky-looking Spider-Man one.



↑ You'll be able to play around with both the look and feel of your bike.



↑ So that's why they call you Skid Mark.

"It could be the most rewarding two-wheeled racer on Xbox"



↑ The Idiot Bikers' Brigade tried hard, but just couldn't get their bikes to take off.



↑ Your rider's outfit will be customisable. Just as well looking at this guy...

» then using your winnings to upgrade your bike or buy bigger, badder, sparklinly new two-wheeled racers.

"We've broken it up into three bike classes," says Greg Bryant, the game's lead designer. "You start off with the 600cc bikes, which are slower but take corners better, and you'll then be able to upgrade various components and blueprint your engine to make sure it's all running smoothly. You can also tune your bike and tweak the gear ratios. As you progress through the races, you can then use the currency you earn to upgrade your bike and buy more powerful ones. As well as the 600cc bikes, we also have 1000cc and 1200cc ones, which are really fast but heavy to manoeuvre. The 1000cc bikes are a mixture of the best of the other two groups, as they handle smoothly and feel nice and weighty."



↑ That photographer had better get out of the way sharpish.

And you know what? Each bike really does feel unique. We took a 600cc bike for a spin around one of the 16 Extreme circuits, Tokyo – a claustrophobic night-time level riddled with tight bends and bottlenecks. Using the Left analogue stick to control the rider's lean – forward and back as well as left and right – the Right analogue stick to accelerate and turn, and the two trigger buttons to control the front and rear brakes, we glided around the circuit, hugging the corners and sticking to

the tarmac like dried-out week-old Cornflakes to a cereal bowl.

Admittedly, the seemingly complex controls took a few laps to get the hang of, but it wasn't too long before we were burning more rubber than an arsonist in a condom factory.

After this we hopped onto a 1200cc bike for a spin around a far more open, rural track that was light on bends and heavy on straights. Using the extensive wrist-twisting skills we've accrued from



Exclusive Access: MotoGP: URT 3



Controlling your bike is tricky at first, but soon becomes second nature.



LIVING THE SOUND OF THAI Moto GP 3 set to give us aural pleasure

ONE OF THE criticisms of *MotoGP 2* was that the bikes sounded like bumblebees in a jam jar. So Climax sent a chap to record real bikes on a MotoGP Championship racetrack. The result? Bikes that roar like a T-Rex returning home from work to find that Mrs T-Rex hasn't put the spuds on yet. You'll also be able to customise your in-game soundtrack with an extensive playlist of rock, hip-hop and drum and bass tunes.



Custom soundtracks, or listen to your own MP3s, plus meaty bikes.



It's already looking and sounding ace.

years of administering Chinese burns to each other, we bit down hard on the throttle and watched in awe as our surroundings began blurring and shaking as the power-packed engine powered us forward with a genuinely throaty growl. Then with the bend approaching we violently tugged the brakes, forcing our mechanised beast's rear wheel to skid out as we heroically overtook the racing line-hugging AI opponent in front of us.

"We've made the bikes much faster and we've put much more emphasis on throttle control," clarifies Bryant. "We also want to iron out the parts of the game that made *MotoGP 2* [Issue 15, 8.9] very difficult, like over-sensitive handling at high speeds, so we've tightened up the leaning." The team seem to be doing a good job so far, creating what could well be the most rewarding two-wheeled racer on Xbox to date.



You'll soon be pulling off daring, high-speed turns like this.

"We've added a new Seeding System, which is our key driver for the game," adds Alexander. "Essentially, how you perform against the AI riders in the Moto GP Championship will determine your seed. As your seed increases, it'll unlock new rider abilities such as confidence, which will see the rider opening up the throttle more

aggressively and leaning harder into corners. Also, the higher your seed, the harder the game will become, as your bike will start handling more like a real-world bike and less like a watered-down motorcycle."

While the new Extreme racing mode will no doubt prove most popular with those amongst us who like to play around with



▲ Thanks to an innovative seeding system, the better you get, the harder the game gets.



▲ Bikes range from 600cc to 1200cc.



▲ Get up, you lazy git.



▲ MotoGP 3's multiplayer options are still under wraps.

» the bikes' looks and feel, hardcore MotoGP enthusiasts need not feel left out. Lying in wait is a 16-race MotoGP Championship season containing all of the riders and liveries from its real-life counterpart, so expect to be tussling with the likes of Valentino Rossi and tweaking your gear ratios - if you're into that kind of thing - as you endeavour to become world champion with the team of your choice.

Climax isn't just concentrating on revamping the single-player game though, as the team is placing every bit as much

emphasis on creating an enjoyable and accessible multiplayer experience too. "We wanted to keep it persistent between the single-player game and the multiplayer game, so we're providing every feature from the single-player game in the multiplayer game too," explains Bryant.

But that's all the information Climax is revealing regarding the multiplayer modes. Alexander and Bryant are very reluctant to reveal any more concrete details at this time, simply stating that you'll be able to play over Xbox Live and via System Link and

EXTRA, EXTRA, DON'T READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Good things come to those who wait

AS IT'S STILL fairly early days, the boys at Climax were reluctant to give too much away in regards to what unlockable extras and mini-games MotoGP 3 will be shipping with. However, they did promise us that there'd be plenty of both, including various bonus liveries. As soon as we know more though, so will you.



▲ The time when Climax reveals all about MotoGP 3's unlockable extras is still some way off. Guess we'll just have to be patient. Humph. (More next issue - ed.)



▲ Controlling your rider's lean will impact on how the bike reacts when you accelerate.

"Accessible yet intuitive; realistic without ever being intimidating"

promising to reveal more juicy info in the coming months.

To finish off, we took part in an exhilarating 16-bike Moto GP Championship race in which we became embroiled in a titanic battle against a full contingent of AI opponents, the forgiving physics allowing us just enough leeway to stay in contention, but proving realistic enough to have us struggling for control around every bend while our faces contorted with sheer concentration.

As we left Climax, mopping ourselves down with a complementary MotoGP 3

towel, it was hard not to feel that the team has potentially crafted a real gem. Accessible yet intuitive, challenging yet fun and realistic without ever being intimidating, it's a two-wheeled racer that could finally find the middle ground between realism and entertainment that we've all been waiting for. And with more information and hands-on time promised soon, you can rest assured that an update will be hurtling its way to these pages within the next couple of months. Don't blink though, or you might just miss it.

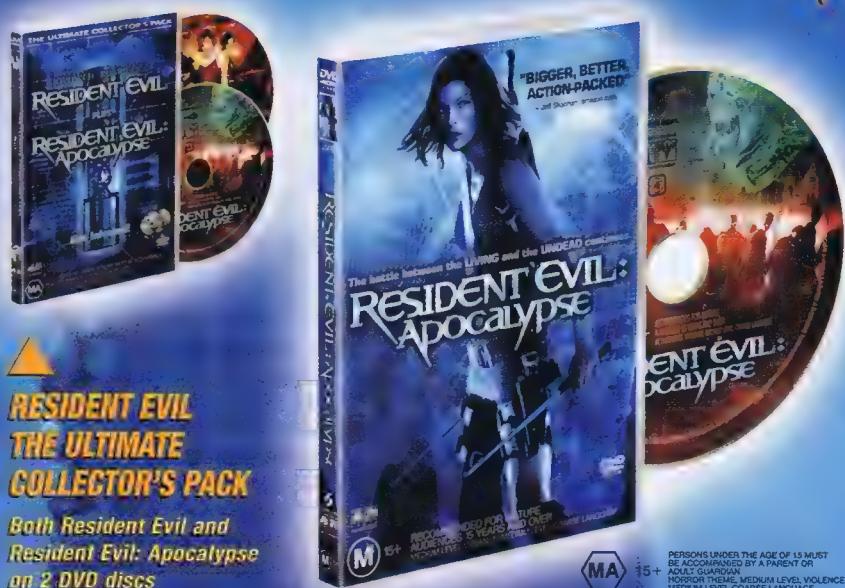
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Reviews

Written by gamers who live and love games



Kevin Says...

THIS month's lineup of games should impress first-person shooter fans with a fearsome quartet of awesome shooters.

Unreal Championship 2 takes traditional first-person shooters in a refreshing new direction, while *Project: Snowblind*, *Star Wars: Republic Commando* and EA's continuation of the *TimeSplitters* franchise all yield impressive results.

The centrepiece of this issue, however, is *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory*, which could be Ubisoft's finest achievement on Xbox. Will it crack the 9.7 mark of the original? Will it equal *Halo 2*'s perfect 10.0? Have we already encountered 2005's Game of the Year? Turn over and find out!

Our Badges explained



XBOX ELITE

Any game scoring a whopping 8.5 or more.



GAME OF THE MONTH

Our favourite of the Elite games reviewed this month.



XBOX LIVE

Downloadable content, online play, or both.



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ON THE DISC

A playable trial or demo of the game is on our disc.

Score Key

8.5-10.0

THE XBOX ELITE - ONE OF THE VERY BEST AVAILABLE

7.5-8.4

A TOP-QUALITY RELEASE THAT'S WELL WORTH HAVING

6.5-7.4

STILL WELL WORTH CONSIDERING, BUT HAS SOME FLAWS

5.0-6.4

AN AVERAGE TITLE WITH NOTHING OUTSTANDING TO OFFER

2.5-4.9

A BAD GAME, AND ONE YOU SHOULDN'T BOTHER WITH

0.0-2.4

CALLING SUCH A RANCID STINKER A 'GAME' IS LIBELLous

Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory 10.0

Sam Fisher is unleashed upon the world of terrorists again.

Unreal Championship 2: TLC 9.8

A shift in perspective doesn't deter this behemoth blaster.

Cold Fear 9.0

Ahoy me hearties. And anything else mutants eat in this chilling tale.

Playboy The Mansion 9.0

Hef shows us it's much more fun reading the mag than making it.

TimeSplitters: Future Perfect 9.0

The future's bright indeed with this comical time-twisting blaster.

Project: Snowblind 8.8

The innovative shooter comes in from the cold to a warm welcome.

Star Wars: Republic Commando 9.0

Special Forces in space make for a stellar addition to the SW series.

FIFA Street 9.0

Mother of God... it's the Nike ad in video game form!

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2 9.8

No stinker here - the Turtles head back to Xbox in a 4-way fighter.

The Bard's Tale 8.8

Hilariously self-deprecating RPG that has nothing to do with poetry.

Tak 2 - The Staff of Dreams 8.8

The loinclothed one returns for an all-new platform adventure.

Constantine 8.8

Keanu knows more than just kung-fu in this sinister movie tie-in.

Fight Night Round 2 8.8

It's seconds out for this surprisingly fun boxer. Get ready to rumble.

Rugby 2005 8.8

EA goes egg-chasing with another licenced sports sim.

SNK vs Capcom: SVC Chaos 8.8

Yet another 2D fighter tries to entice us back into the ring... yawn.

Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone 8.8

Respectable hack 'n' slash that's not entirely forgettable.

OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN
XBOX MAGAZINE
GAME OF THE
MONTHOFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN
XBOX MAGAZINE
ELITE

Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory

Where are James Bond and Solid Snake when World War III is about to break out? At a guess, we'd say they're cowering behind Sam Fisher.

X Dev: Ubisoft Montreal

X Pub: Ubisoft

X Players: 1-4

X Live: 2-4

X Link: 2-4

X Release: March 2005

X www.splintercell.com

Words: Kevin Cheung

They can see you from a distance. They can see the movement of your shadow. They're armed to the teeth with modern weaponry and they're alert enough to even hear your footsteps. And if you so much as breathe within a few metres of them, they'll gun you down like a wild animal. These are the crack soldiers of *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory*, the third in Ubisoft's covert ops franchise where clandestine wars and secret political agendas are fought and won in the shadows.

These soldiers are hunting none other than Sam Fisher, a veteran operative of the Third Echelon group and one of the few people on this planet who wield the so-called Fifth Freedom.

That's the freedom to kill others so that we ordinary civilians can continue to enjoy our lives in ignorant bliss.

Sam Fisher is no stranger to the Xbox. His adventures in the original *Splinter Cell* and its sequel, *Pandora Tomorrow*, have established him as one of the baddest asses in the pantheon of video game superheroes. With cool precision, he'll knock out the lights, break one man's neck, pop another guy between the eyes, hide their bodies and move on without breaking a sweat – like clockwork. His trademark goggles, which grant him night vision, thermal vision and electromagnetic vision, give him an almost unfair advantage against his foes.



↑ Sam Fisher has so many different tools, weapons and manoeuvres that it's essential to play through the game's training mode.

"Imagine Halo 2 condensed into the tighter-fitting world of espionage"

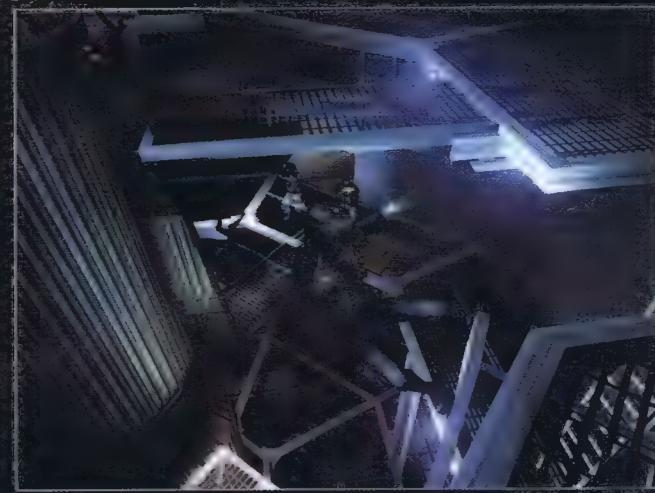
» *Splinter Cell* brings a lot more than high technology to the table, though. If there's anything else that's been established by the series, it's that political intrigue has a place in video game discourse. No, we don't mean the punchline-a-minute "I am your father" soap opera of *Metal Gear Solid*, but plots and conspiracies involving real-world affairs that blur the line between fiction and reality. This is the world of Tom Clancy, the same terrorist-ridden world inhabited by *Rainbow Six* and *Ghost Recon*.

In *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory*, what starts out as a routine rescue mission turns into a series of events that could lead to World War III. Why? Well, you'll just have to play the game to find out. What we'll tell you, without spoiling too much, is that the man you are initially sent to rescue is a leading scientist in the field of Masse Kernels.

Chaos Theory is the sequel that fans have been waiting for. *Pandora Tomorrow* (Issue 28, 9.4) is the second game in name, but it was coded at Ubisoft's Shanghai studio. *Chaos Theory*, on the other hand, is coded by Ubisoft's Montreal studio, the studio that came up with the original game two years ago. With *Chaos Theory*, Ubisoft Montreal has produced a technical

form of computer algorithms. Masse Kernels have numerous applications in information warfare and the significance of their discovery has been likened to the Manhattan Project. It goes without saying, then, that this scientist, a Dr. Bruce Morgenholz, cannot fall into the wrong hands. Unfortunately, Morgenholz is compromised within the first half hour of play. As Sam Fisher slowly uncovers the truth behind his kidnapping, world security gradually spirals out of control.

Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory is the sequel that fans have been waiting for. *Pandora Tomorrow* (Issue 28, 9.4) is the second game in name, but it was coded at Ubisoft's Shanghai studio. *Chaos Theory*, on the other hand, is coded by Ubisoft's Montreal studio, the studio that came up with the original game two years ago. With *Chaos Theory*, Ubisoft Montreal has produced a technical



↑ Switch to heat vision when you can't see your target.

showcase that draws gasps of disbelief; an adventure filled with high-tech weapons, lethal manoeuvres and acrobatic movements too irresistible for action fans to miss. It's as though history is repeating itself - as though we're seeing *Splinter Cell* for the first time again.

The first thing to mention about *Chaos Theory* is that it looks like a sequel, streets ahead of *Pandora Tomorrow*. Imagine the geometry and detail that's found in the spacious, open-air levels of *Halo 2* (Issue 34, 10.0) condensed into the tighter-fitting world of espionage, and you'll have an idea of what to expect. Houses and apartments are painstakingly decorated with wallpaper and furniture; offices with computers, printers, indoor plants and dodgy kitchen appliances; military

Bonus info

CLASSIC TRICKS

Sam Fisher still has all of his original moves at his disposal - like holding his breath to steady his sniper aim, whistling to lure people to your position and throwing objects to distract a guard. And yes, his goggles still glow in the dark.



↑ Keep your eyes and ears peeled at all times.



↑ "How do you like my Super Atomic Wedge?"



↑ Find a hiding spot and make sure your shadow doesn't show.



Bonus info



HANGING AROUND
Like certain breeds of dog, some security guards just don't have the presence of mind to look up. Which is great for Sam, who can now hang from the ceiling and strangle anyone who walks beneath him.

"You'd swear blind that they look real enough to touch"

» facilities with crates, supplies, and ammunition - none of which blurs or pixelates when examined in greater detail.

This illusion of reality is all but sold by what appears to be every special effect in the book, including a few clever tricks we've never seen before. Transparencies, dynamic lighting effects, normal mapping and so on produce the obvious show-stoppers like shadows, smoke, clouds of mist and gravel-covered roads. The new, subtler features produce more substantive results, though. For instance, if there's an enemy soldier standing inside a tent, players can silently cut a hole through the fabric, slip inside undetected and puncture his lungs from behind.

Surfaces of every texture are also rendered with incredible detail. Look closely at the beaten

surface of metal sheets, the ripples and imperfections in glass panels and the grain of wooden objects, and you'd swear blind that they look real enough to touch. Water is especially impressive as wet surfaces exhibit both reflective and translucent qualities. And how's this for versatility - if you fire a sticky shocker device into a puddle, its electrical current will conduct through the water and strike anyone unfortunate enough to be standing in it!

The visuals aren't all that's 'new and improved'. *Chaos Theory* presents players with new moves and equipment that add a deeper level of strategy to the missions. Among the most significant additions is an electro-magnetic jamming device on Sam's pistol, which is perfect for temporarily disabling computers, security

cameras and laser tripwires. If you click the left analogue stick while your weapon is drawn, you'll discover that Sam has the ability to switch hands with his weapon. This makes it possible for him to lean out from a wall on both the left and right sides without having to expose his weak side.

Surveillance is a little more fun, too, with the option of being able to switch views between sticky cameras. Just flick between them as you would switch channels on a television, and you'll have a complete spatial comprehension of your surroundings and who you're up against. It's possible to recover your cameras later on for use elsewhere - just be sure not to fire them to out-of-reach positions.

Combat offers many lethal and non-lethal options. People can be strangled, shot, incapacitated, electrocuted and slashed in the throat - it just depends on what you're trying to accomplish. Most useful is the quick melee attack - pull the R trigger when you're in close proximity to your target and a quick knife-attack will remove any threat they pose.

CO-OP Two spies are better than one

HELP A MATE up the wall by turning your body into a human ladder! Cripple a guard by hurling your partner at him like a spear! Lead the guards on a wild goose chase through the shadows while your partner goes to flick that crucial switch on the door! These are just some of the things you'll be doing in the cooperative mode of *Chaos Theory*, which can be played in split-screen, system link and Xbox Live. Make sure you've got your plan of attack straight between the two of you - you don't want to accidentally gun each other down (though happily there's an option to switch off friendly fire). Think of this as an intense two-player version of *Rainbow Six* played from the third person.



↑ Do two things at once, not one thing with two people.



↑ "NO! LEFT! LEFT, YOU FOOL! HE CAN SEE ME!"



Bonus info

WEAPON LOAD-OUT

After each mission briefing, Sam is given a choice of different weapon load-outs. He can use weapons that are designed for stealth, or go for something that suits an all-out assault.



MORE MAPS PLEASE!

Nothing's been confirmed as yet, but all the signs are pointing towards the release of more maps for both the co-op and adversarial multiplayer modes through Xbox Live. If we're lucky, some of them might appear on a future demo disc. Watch this space for updates.

» One might ask whether these new features will realistically make any difference to how the mission objectives are reached. You just sneak, stalk, kill and move on, right? A closer examination of *Chaos Theory*'s game engine and AI reveals otherwise. The soldiers of *Chaos Theory* have many subtle layers of alertness, ranging from faint misgivings to fear-of-God panic. Taking the time to pick a lock instead of breaking it, for instance, eliminates the immediate alarms that would be raised if a guard detects the broken lock. The same idea applies to security cameras – if you temporarily disable them with an electro-magnetic pulse, they won't suspect anything more sinister than a minor malfunction. Ultimately the number of kills and detections you rack up in any given level will affect your rating as a spy.

With so many options, weapons, gadgets and possibilities to use, one could be forgiven for falling into the trap of feeling invincible. The first time we moved through a fabric wall, we thought, "they don't stand a chance – this almost feels like cheating" before reaching for an unsuspecting guard's throat.

How wrong we were. These troops are smart. They keep in touch with each other. They light up flares when it's too dark for them to see. In the harder difficulty settings, they'll toss a grenade if they know you're sitting around the corner. And this guard we were about to kill? He saw our shadow on the canvass and managed to squeeze off a round from his sidearm, alerting the surrounding guards to our presence. Sam died a very embarrassing death shortly thereafter. And if you think that's bad, wait till you encounter mercenaries who carry the same equipment as



↑ After a year of bad PR, the US forces have had to resort to tickle-torture during interrogations.

you do, night vision goggles and all!

Thankfully, as demanding as *Chaos Theory* sounds, it is rarely frustrating and never impossible. Veterans of the original *Splinter Cell* and *Pandora Tomorrow* will recall (probably with some indignation) the extreme aggravation caused by the 'Mission Failed' screen that instantly pops

up just because of one inconsequential error, like an alarm being tripped or a bystander being killed. It was arbitrary and, frankly, a bit stupid. With *Chaos Theory*, Ubisoft has done the unexpected by making the mission objectives a little more flexible and accommodating of mistakes. There are now primary and optional secondary goals to



↑ Too bad Sam didn't bring his space suit for the occasion...



↑ Can anyone see the guy in the background who's managed to sneak his way up?

» achieve. The more you reach, the better your rating. And if you accidentally kill a soldier when you're not supposed to use lethal force, you'll be treated to a quick "Fisher! What are you doing?", "Save it for the court-marshal, Sir" dialogue, after which you'll be able to continue with the mission.

In other words, Ubisoft has made *Chaos Theory* a little easier, and it's all the better for it. This relative 'easing up' on the difficulty level is compounded, probably unintentionally, by the few little holes in the game's AI. For instance, in the normal difficulty setting, we were able to lure a guard to a remote corner and dispatch him with the quick melee attack; and then use his body to lure every other guard in the vicinity to a similar fate. To be fair, this is only a minor problem, as no game's AI is completely infallible.

Interestingly, for all of the graphical effects, features and technical achievements, there is one

more quality in *Chaos Theory* that raises it above its predecessors: its personality and sense of humour. *Chaos Theory* is not a great experience just because of its intense gameplay, but because it's also a fun game to watch and absorb. Spare a few moments and listen to the dialogue – there are loads of in-jokes and popular culture references to be found. We nearly fell off our seats laughing at the sight of Sam insisting he's not a ninja while holding a guard at gunpoint. Moments like these are priceless as they are memorable, creating a sense of continuity that make it more than 'just another sequel'.

But wait – there's more. *Pandora Tomorrow* provided us with only a glimpse of the possibilities behind a multiplayer stealth game. *Chaos Theory* ups the ante by offering players a two-player co-operative mode, playable in split-screen, system link and via Xbox Live. Together, a pair of friends»



↑ Nobody notices a mugging in New York City.

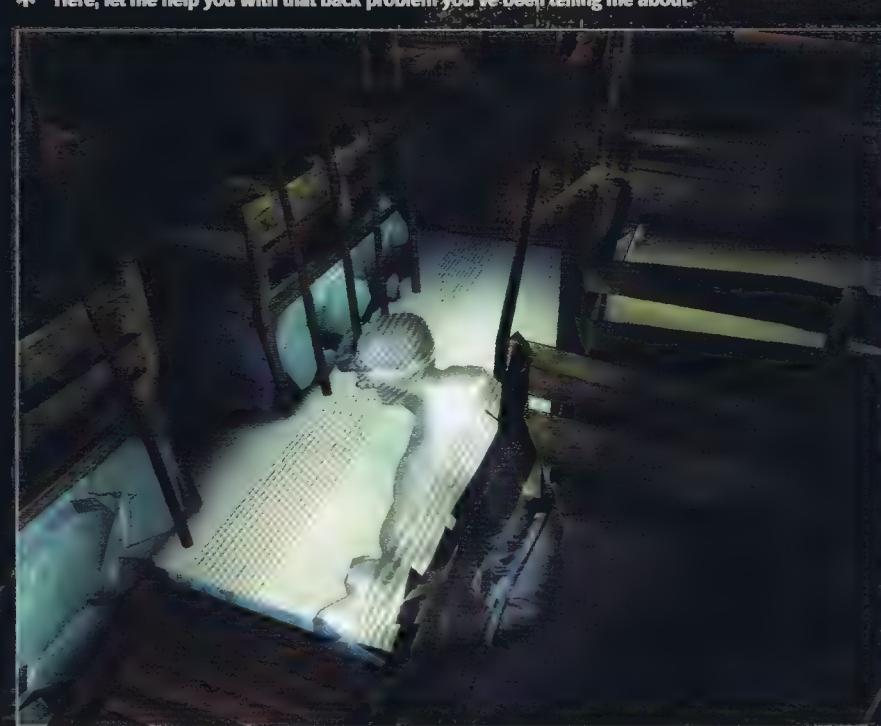


↑ "Hmm... something's just not right about my wallpaper... I don't recall there being three green dots in the pattern..."

Bonus info



If you've kept up with modern science, you'll be vaguely familiar with the notion that chaos theory uses mathematical structures to calculate and predict the course and consequences of seemingly random events – hence the common phrase that a butterfly flapping its wings in the Pacific can cause a tsunami wave on the Californian coast.



"We've no doubt that co-op mode will be the source of a lot of unintended hilarity"

» must literally work together, take advantage of being able to do two things at once and conquer four massive levels. They must winch each other up buildings, open doors for each other, cover each other from enemy threats, heal each other and so on.

We've no doubt that co-op mode will be the source of a lot of unintended hilarity. Already we've managed to kill our partner by accidentally jumping down on his head, and then kill our partner again by kicking the door down while he was trying to pick the lock from the other side. It's a test of one's nerve as well - there's nothing funnier than watching your partner lose patience with waiting around in the shadows, running headlong into a firefight and then begging you to come and heal him. And of course there's the inevitable competition that arises from who's rated

as the better spy.

Also available is the familiar Mercenaries Vs Spies adversarial mode from *Pandora Tomorrow*. The main difference is that players can use the same co-operative manoeuvres from the co-op mode with their partners. In addition to the original *Pandora Tomorrow* maps, the Versus mode also comes with six new maps as well as the two Premium Content downloadable maps from Xbox Live.

Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory is without doubt the best in the series and, while not perfect, is the closest to perfection the franchise has come for the stealth genre. Whether you're new to the series or one of those hardcore nutters who emails us about how they only took two days to finish *Pandora Tomorrow*, *Chaos Theory* is a game you'll treasure in your games collection.

The Summary



SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- 1 A massive improvement over the previous two games. Some of the visual effects have to be seen to be believed!
- 2 Fantastic musical score by Amon Tobin - much more atmospheric than the usual espionage fare.
- 3 Co-op and adversarial multiplayer modes are a big reason to keep coming back to this game.
- 4 There are many layers of strategy made possible by the game's intelligent AI system.
- 5 The levels aren't as open-ended as your options. Every mission is ultimately linear and finite in nature.

The Verdict

9.8 / 10

The best of its class, *Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory* is a powerful display of the latest and best things that games can do.

EXCLUSIVE EXCLUSIVE ACCESS - ISSUE 29, 36 & 37
COMING SOON! Hints & cheats



UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2

THE LIANDRI CONFLICT

We take a reality check on Midway's first-person, no third, no, wait... awesome shooter

Words: Andy Irving

Dev: Epic Games	Pub: Midway
Players: 1-2 Split	Live: 2-8 players
Players: 2-8 S.Link	Release: April 2005
www.liandriconflict.com	

WE FEAR CHANGE. Especially when powerhouse franchises like the *Unreal* series are involved. And especially when a game moves away from its established roots and dares to be different. Take *Ghost Recon 2* (Issue 35, 8.0) for example. A firm favourite amongst FPS fans, the shift in perspective from first- to third-person alienated the majority of sniping spectres and lost some of the comfortingly familiar characteristics we knew and loved. So we were wary of *UC2*. As in, lock your doors, stay off the moors, we-don't-like-your-sort-round-here wary. The original was a solid, uncompromising twitch shooter, and we liked it that way.

It came as nice surprise then, when we got to grapple with *Liandri Conflict*. At first glance it seemed like any other *Unreal* title; a slick, smooth game engine, meaty weapons that feel immensely satisfying to wield, and the return of all our favourite characters. Yep, *UC2* ticks all the usual sequel boxes. Dig a little deeper however, and you'll discover this sequel has evolved far beyond its now seemingly generic predecessors... >>



We kicked off the impressive single-player campaign with Tournament mode. Seven *Unreal* characters are immediately available, and players follow their individual career ladders through the bloodthirsty, Liandri Corporation-sponsored conflict. The default difficulty setting informs us we're 'Experienced' at the game, though with later settings confidently described as Expert, Masterful and Godlike, you can tell, as is characteristic of the series, that *UC2* isn't going to be an easy ride. This sets a precedent for the majority of the game; sneaky camping and sniping gets you nowhere, as frighteningly astute AI will suss your tactics and overwhelm your position in no time. *UC2* makes no bones (apart from yours) about its punishingly hard difficulty. Skilful dodging, nerves of steel and faster twitching than an electrified ornithologist are the only way to make progress. Your head's pounding, sweat's

dripping down your face and the taunts of your last slaughterer are ringing in your ears. This is brutal, in your face blasting, and we love it.

All our favourite *Unreal* weapons return, complete with primary and secondary modes of fire (see Weapons of Mass De-Rezztion, below). Before each match there's the handy option of assigning your character weapons from the familiar arsenal – one Explosive (rocket launchers, ripjacks, flak cannon and all-new grenade launcher) and one Energy weapon (shock and sniper rifles, bio rifle and stinger gun). This option allows players to really learn each weapon's combos and strengths; the downside is you may ignore the less appealing (though just as powerful in the right hands) weapons, like the bio rifle.

Each Tournament rung features different game modes for all the characters involved. It's great fun to experiment and master the ton of different



↑ The bio rifle is no mere snot-thrower.

Adrenaline powers on offer (see I Have The Power!, right). Deathmatch and Capture The Flag are obviously present, but also on the roster is the brilliant Overdose. A bastard child of Bomb Run, different coloured orbs will sporadically spawn

Bonus info



ANTI-FREEZE

It's great fun stunning an opponent with your Nakhti pistols, but it's not so funny when it happens to you. To get rid of your temporary paralysis before an enemy bears down on you, frantically waggle the Left thumbstick and tap the A button.

RED VS BLUE

A great improvement when playing team-based games is the way players from each side will glow red or blue. This really helps players identify enemies from a distance, and should save a few red faces on Xbox Live after you mistakenly blow away a team-mate about to grab the flag.

DEAD FAMILIAR

Completing each *Unreal* personality's Tournament mode unlocks their alternate versions, that in turn become playable characters. We loved the undead version of the recently resurrected Lauren.

Keep on your toes, and your finger on the trigger.



WEAPONS OF MASS DE-REZZTION

Get on the end of one of these and you'll be sore in the morning...

THE WEAPONS all come with primary and secondary fire modes. The latter often has a further secondary use, by holding down the Left trigger for a few seconds. If you live that long.



STINGER: A powerful mini-gun in its own right, the stinger alternately fires homing shells. As long as you keep the target within your reticule, they'll hit home.



BIO RIFLE: Neglected by many, when this baby's charged up it releases a huge cloud of damaging toxic gas. More potent than Owen's farts after a night on the sauce.



ROCKET LAUNCHER: This bad boy fires off three rockets at once. Hold down the Left trigger for several seconds to unleash a homing salvo that's near impossible to dodge.



RIPJACK: The boomeranging blade may not seem like much, but charge it up to lay down several highly explosive mines. Great for making a hasty retreat.

I HAVE THE POWER! The Unreal champs prove that sometimes, winners do drugs...

ADRENALINE meters can be filled as before, but now a menu can be brought up at any time by tapping X. One full bar enables three different powers to be used; two full bars unleash the second series of three, more powerful abilities. Intuitive controls mean activating each is a cinch. Each character has unique powers, though several generic types are consistent.



Use the Blade Shield to protect yourself from attackers, and to gain a distinct advantage during melee combat.



Warrior Spirit increases your killing ability by isolating targets against the scenery and making your character stronger.



Speed does exactly what it says on the tin. Great for getting out of a tight spot or making the final dash during Overdose.



Lightning Burst is best suited to close-quarters combat against multiple enemies to weaken or kill them instantly.



Cannibalize is limited to the mechanical contestants, and although it depletes health, it's very effective.



EMP blast not only weakens foes in the nearby vicinity, but is deadly against robot characters and nullifies their powers.

on a map. Players fight opponents to collect them, then endeavour to leg it to the corresponding reception points. Deposit orbs at the distant, corresponding-coloured gates, and you'll earn six points, or wuss out and go for the nearer, opposing-coloured gate for three. Equally, the longer the player holds onto an orb the more their radiation levels build up and, when they reach the relevant coloured gate, result in a huge 'overdose'.

Adrenaline powers are instantly assigned, and you'll temporarily become an unstoppable killing machine - great for barging your way back to the next orb spawn point. Brilliant fun, this game mode sits particularly well with players not inclined to the strategic co-ordination of CTF, and should be an absolute blast online.

Just when you think it can't get any better... hit the B button. You'll instantly be yanked out of the immersive, enveloping first-person view and seamlessly transported into third-person mode - it's quite an out of body experience. And this is when the hammer hits home. Epic, in a masterstroke, has created not only a worthy successor to *Unreal Championship* (Issue 10, 9.2), but also an innovative new direction to take the series in. And it's absolutely feckin' brilliant.

The great Training mode soon puts any uncertainties to rest. Following the tale of *Unreal* gave Anubis's pre-match nerves, close buddy Sobek educates players in the ways of moving, jumping, and taking advantage of your newfound liberation. Increased spatial awareness

means players can now vault around like never before. Wall jumps are an essential part of getting out of a tight spot, but are awkward and unintuitive in first-person mode. They're great for evading enemy fire, too, so hone that 'wall-sprung dodge technique' [groan - ed]. One of the biggest things we noticed was that we often found ourselves playing in third-person without feeling a need to change out of it! UC die-hards may baulk at the

thought of neglecting the familiar first-person view, but as sacrilegious as this may seem, it's actually great for showing what's going on right around your character. Sure, you have to look down the barrel to get the right feel for a sniper rifle, but what about when something's going on right beside you? Third-person view to the rescue!

The most practical reason for the switch in point of view is the introduction of the fantastic

✓ Szalor: just like Edward Scissorhands. Only not quite as shy.

Devastation wades in fists first.



It's brilliant scoring a tricky headshot from range - just watch they don't bounce it back.



"Players can tailor games to their exact specs, from health and weapons to bots and rules"

Bonus info

TIME TO KILL

Certain levels and Challenges encompass the barbaric, but rather fun Nali Slaughter. Players must slay as many of these meditating teleporters as possible within the time limit, whilst evading their enemy who's trying to do the same. Aside from being sadistic fun, this gives you a great chance to hone your melee technique.

MADE IN HEAVEN

Tailoring your perfect match is easy with the comprehensive multiplayer options. Increasing your stats on Xbox Live is a bit trickier however, because only quality kills (i.e. those performed on a player with a level equal or higher than yours) count towards your overall ranking.

melee combat. Each character has the ability to unleash a close-up attack using their character's weapon of choice (be it staffs, swords or good old-fashioned fists). Faster, weaker attacks complement slower, more powerful moves, though mis-time a lunge from a distance (jump + attack) and a rival player will punish you. Melee combat opens up a huge amount of brilliantly bone-crunching gameplay variants. Holding both triggers creates a shield to protect from range attacks, whilst tapping the Left trigger reflects back an opponent's projectile. It's immensely satisfying to precisely deflect a sniper shot right back at a camping foe, though you'll need nerves of steel to continually bounce back a barrage of rockets raining down. These defensive options really balance the gameplay, and as a result there's no discernable advantage between the safety of ranged weapons and getting up close and personal with your claws. A lock-on function (click down on the Right thumbstick) is available, and though useful for range attacks, is vital when you're going toe to toe with a hyperactive vampire like Janus.

For the ultimate in stylish slaughtering, *UC2* takes a leaf out of Midway stablemate *Mortal Kombat*'s book, and introduces incredible finishing moves. Nimble fingers are definitely needed to pull off the tricky combos required to execute them

though (see Finish Him!, top right). Another improvement is the fantastic level design. Whereas *UC* offered relatively flat and two-dimensional arenas, the killing fields of *UC2* boast verticality in spades. Sumptuous cinematics pave the way for some seriously gorgeous visuals, and don't be surprised if you find yourself continually de-rezzed because you're gawping at the beauty of your surroundings. Getting around involves some *Prince of Persia*-style wall jumping to reach the upper echelons, and every individual character animation is impressive, from the sprightly springing of Selket to the heavier-footed, ungainly gait of Szalor. Power-ups are generously distributed throughout, though due to the frantic pace of the game you'll need to make like Michael Johnson to snap them up, particularly the brutally powerful Unreal Damage icons. Although single-player mode doesn't involve strict missions per se, each stage is elevated above the 'yet another Deathmatch' monotony thanks in part to the unrelentingly good enemy AI, and to the abundance of intelligently designed maps to learn. And even though Anubis is the only character with a complex back story, there's still enough variation in each match to keep the ADD divas happy.

The assorted Challenges are awesome as well. Described by the developer as "near-impossible".



↑ Every single match is truly electrifying.



↑ Just dropping in for a flying visit. (Fired! - ed.)

they are achievable but will definitely separate the experts from the newbies. Variants of all the regular modes, they throw players into viciously difficult situations. You could find yourself overcoming the deficit of being 15-nil down in the middle of a Nali Slaughter match, or ten kills down in a team Deathmatch against three mean robot snipers, with the clock almost up. Though significantly tougher than the main game, players are handsomely rewarded for sweating blood and tears with the wealth of unlockable extras. Game modes, multiplayer maps, alternate versions of each character and even the great Raiden himself are all available once you've mastered these ball-breaking tasks.

But for all its lone gunmen attributes, the heart of the *Unreal* series has always been its multiplayer capabilities, and *UC2* delivers like a rocket to the face. Up to eight players can frag it out over System Link or Xbox Live, in more than 40 stunning arenas. We would've liked to have seen provision for up to 16 players, but then again the frenetic pace of the game means you're never more than a lunge attack away from another opponent. Overdose, though an individual (i.e. not team-based) game only, provides some spectacular edge-of-the-seat moments, and there's nothing like co-ordinating a well-timed flag snatch with double Adrenaline powers in CTF.

There are enough customisation options to fill a Juggernaut's battle armour thanks to the brilliant Mutator game options. Featuring an almost incomprehensible amount of game-changing variants, players can tailor each game to their exact specs, from health and weapon restrictions, to the type of bots and specific match rules. For the die-hard there's even the chance to play as the original *UC* intended - no third-person view, no melee attacks and old-skool Adrenaline powers only.

You'd think all this bouncing around and blistering pace would cause some slowdown, but not at all. The engine runs super smoothly, and displays some seriously impressive visuals.



↑ Gorge goes gardening with the bio rifle.



↑ You'll frequently see the red mist during *UC2*.

FINISH HIM! Putting the blood into bloodsport, Unreal Championship style

JUST LIKE Mortal Kombat, UC2 features some unbelievable finishing moves, or coup de grâces. Equip the default Nakhti pistols and hold down the Left trigger to charge them up. Unleash a stun shot and your opponent will be temporarily frozen, giving you a precious few seconds to get up close and personal to a foe and pull off the given combo. The relevant button sequence will briefly appear on screen, though you'll need to play with a character for a fair old while to really get au fait with each move. Pull it off though, and you will be rewarded with a stunning, panoramic view of a brutally violent finishing move. We're not condoning wanton bloodlust, but this feels seriously great.



↑ Freeze a foe, then toss the pistols and go to third-person. ↑ Now hit the tricky sequence to perform an elaborate kill.

Unreal Damage power-ups = ultimate carnage.



↑ Raiden comes complete with Lightning and Teleport powers.

particularly when you combine several Adrenaline powers like Speed (a blurry screen akin to playing with a bottle of vodka in your veins) and Energy Burst (like throwing a box of Redheads into a fireworks factory) at once.

We feel really guilty about loving UC2. Dirty, almost. We have been so faithful to the traditional FPS over the last few years, never questioning or wanting more. Other first-person floozies striving for our attention also started wearing the alluring guise of innovative powers (see Project: Snowblind, page 072), but couldn't sway us. Then UC2 sauntered into the room and our jaws dropped. This new shooter in town didn't just impress us, it blew us away with its gorgeous looks, balanced weaponry and unbelievably fun gameplay. We're now scarred by this illicit encounter, and no FPS experience will ever be the same again. For a reality check on the future of shooters, look no further.

The Summary

UC2: THE LIANDRI CONFLICT THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

- 1 It's still classic *Unreal*; tons of brutal weapons, a break-neck pace and enough blood and gore to amply splatter the expansive arenas.
- 2 The third-person perspective allows unprecedented freedom and really helps make the melee combat work better than ever before.
- 3 A very intuitive interface makes executing the wealth of new Adrenaline powers pleasingly simple during firefights.
- 4 A huge amount of variation, be it different game modes, countless Mutator options or the numerous unique playable characters.
- 5 Over 40 stunning, intelligently designed maps plus a fast, fluid engine makes multiplayer a no-tie. *Halo 2* had better watch its back on Live.

The Verdict

9.2 / 10

Spun-off from the traditional first-person blasting with frantic third-person action. A shooter of *Unreal* proportions. Superb.

Preview - Issue 36
Hints - Issue 40

Cold Fear

When the ship goes down, you'd better be ready

Words: Jermaine Mann

Dev: Darkworks	Pub: Ubisoft
Players 1	Live: None
Release: March 2005	
www.coldfear.com	

THERE HAVE been plenty of horror films set on boats, but not many videogames. For that reason, *Cold Fear* is incredibly original.

It's got a rocking Russian whaler, a cursed oil rig, plenty of mutated sea life and the kind of stormy, shit-house weather not experienced since last summer's jaunt to Melbourne. Dive below the surface though, and what you get is generic survival horror fare. Just one that requires you to stock up on the travel sickness pills before you go wading in.

The whole game smacks of John Carpenter - disturbingly quiet locales conspiring with clichéd shocks that still make you jump, no matter how hard you try to resist. Plus acting dodgy enough to know the perpetrators are destined for a life of C-movie stardom. You play a coastguard with a military background, sent to investigate a deserted Russian vessel in mysterious, shadowy waters. What you become embroiled in is something more sinister - a kind of Dr Moreau plot concerning a dodgy scientist and immoral experimentation on amphibious sea-life. Subsequently, you find yourself taunted by crab-like Exocels, who turn lifeless corpses into sprinter zombies of the *28 Days Later* variety, and other weird oddities, such

as the giant leech-like monsters who plop off ceilings and scuttle around rooms like Olympic floor gymnasts on steroids.

In between the taut exploration is quite a bit of combat, and this is perhaps where it differs most from the likes of *Silent Hill 4* (Issue 33, 7.0) and *The Suffering* (Issue 28, 8.0). It's got a separate, combat-oriented viewpoint (for more intense fighting), no auto-aim, and requires you to use cover and inflammable barrels to your strategic advantage. Sadly, it would be especially good if it weren't marred by such dodgy implementation. Killing zombie infectants involves destroying their brain, so the fact that the same button is used to stamp on heads as open doors can invariably result in frustration. The camera is also more annoying than it should be. There is no manual control during standard third-person, and the excellent 'over-the-shoulder' perspective (used specifically for the shoot-outs) can be disorienting during the change-over, causing you to end up looking in completely the opposite direction. Not the ideal scenario when you've got a zombie tearing chunks out of your abdomen with objects pointier than Leatherface's own chainsaw collection.

Cold Fear is a decent, polished survival horror fest with an effective use of atmosphere and excellent weather effects (it never stops raining - fitting, but how much water do you need in a game?). It's just a bit too flawed in its execution and weak in the storytelling department to make it anything truly terrifying. A reasonable effort, just don't expect it to give you really horrible nightmares. Only very bad sea sickness, and for that we recommend lozenges.

Bonus info



LOST AGAIN

Another interesting thing about *Cold Fear* is the level design. Rather than being guided down a traditionally linear route, the game's ship and oil rig settings feature a large-ish playing area, full of door puzzles and secret codes. There's a lot of retracing of steps, which can be a burden on your directional skills. And with new enemies appearing when you least expect them, it crams in a few unexpected shocks along the way too...



↑ Oh dear, somebody's got the beer goggles on.



↑ Shotgun shoot-outs can be damn messy.



↑ Not an ideal time to practise chin-ups.



↑ Shoot barrels to roast enemies quickly.



↑ The influence of *28 Days Later* means this zombie moves faster than a haemorrhoids victim on the way to the chemist.

The Summary

COLD FEAR THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 Third-person survival horror set out at sea, featuring atmospheric, creaking whalers and derelict old oil rigs.
- 2 John Carpenter-style chills, with tense exploration broken by sudden, gory frights. Clichéd but effective.
- 3 Intense tactical combat, with an over-the-shoulder perspective. Marred by slightly iffy controls and aiming, though.
- 4 No manual camera in standard third-person. Can become quite disorientating when navigating through levels.
- 5 Solid horror-fest, but the story is relatively weak and the gameplay is still largely generic despite the strategic fighting.

The Verdict

Very solid if predictable survival horror, marred by slightly awkward combat. *Resident Evil* fans may get a chill.

7.4 / 10

PREV: [CUSA News - Issues 35](#)
COMING SOON: [Hints - Issue 40](#)

[NEXT: Final Fantasy X-2](#)

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a Showstopper?

do you have the
pedigree of a champion?

are you willing to
take a leap of faith?

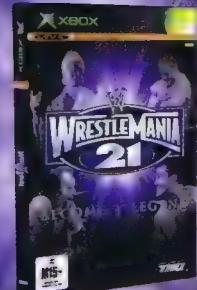


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↑ We're not sure if Dick is a name or suggestion.



↑ You're meant to hide the sausage, not grill it!

Playboy: The Mansion

Could this be the closest some of you get to a naked woman?

Words: Eliot Fish

Dev: Cyberlore Studios	Publisher: Ubisoft
Players: 1	Live: Downloads
Release: April 2005	
www.playhef.com	

It's all about the tits. Let's face it, huh? And *Playboy: The Mansion* is all about perving on lusciously buxom... polygons. It's weird, but what's even weirder is that it works. The formula is quite simple: steal some gameplay from *The Sims 2*, license some Playboy centrefolds and pummel the player with all sorts of voyeuristic treats. With the prospect of increasingly plump mammarys and progressively hotter poses, is there a single red-blooded male gamer on the planet who wouldn't want to check out this game? We doubt it. It may seem shallow, corny, and after a while repetitive, but *Playboy: The Mansion* will reel most of you in for as long as it takes for you to forget how much you paid for it. Feeling dirty yet?

Okay, so it's not quite as stimulating as typing "Neriah Davis" into Google, but *Playboy: The Mansion* still has enough gratuitous, gyrating and wobbling boobies for it to need a thorough "examination" by the OFLC. We're sure they were suitably entertained. The aim here is to build the Playboy empire up from scratch, publish monthly issues of the magazine and complete a number of objective-based missions. Oh... and to ogle at tits. You play as Hugh Hefner himself, or "Hef" as his buddies call him. As Hef, you have to co-ordinate your network of staff and celebrity pals so that you squeeze out the best possible content for the magazine every month. We suspect you'll be squeezing a few other things during the month too.

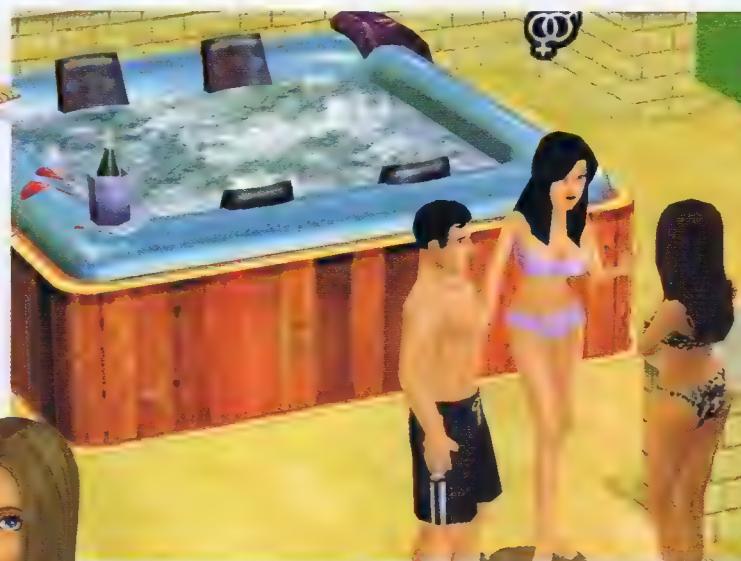
Like in *The Sims*, each character has various personal desires that need to be fulfilled, but more



↑ *whew* no sign of Michael Jackson.

importantly there are three ways to impress them socially - friendships, business and romance. Most of your time is spent initiating conversations and choosing to chat on a topic that will improve your standing with them. This builds up that particular rating between the two of you, which can result in a business partnership, a lasting friendship or... hot sex on the couch. This is the crux of the entire game.

To run the magazine, you also need to hire staff - photographers and journalists - as well as Bunnies to keep guests happy and Playmates to use in various photoshoots. The secret to gathering successful content for the magazine is to ensure that everyone is happy and gets on with each other. You can slyly introduce your writers to various celebrities and encourage them to start a friendship so as to ensure that the interview you then request is as good as it can be. Of



↑ "I'd love a threesome, but it's just not allowed in this game."



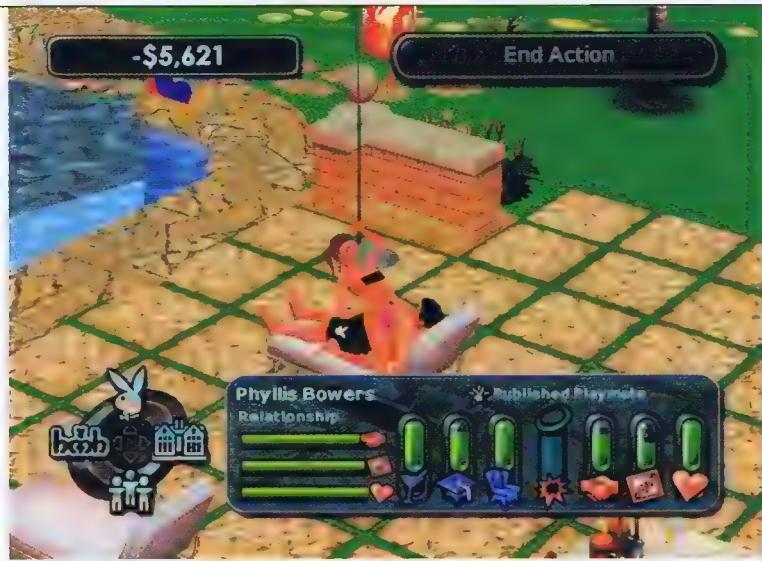
course, you also have to make sure that the content you are collecting is relevant to whatever particular market is hot that month - be it Sports, Film and TV, Music, Sexuality and so on. Then just invite over the relevant celebrities you need to schmooze.

The best part of making *Playboy* mag, of course, is directing the photoshoots. Yes, you choose the playmate or celebrity, select their clothing (or lack thereof), ask them to pose, and then zoom and rotate the virtual camera and snap away to your heart's content. Of course, your actual photos don't really get judged by the game - the quality rating you get awarded will depend on the chemistry that you developed earlier between staff and subject. Once you have all the elements for an issue, you send it off to print and watch the money roll in. The money you earn can then be spent on hiring

Bonus info

MILLION DOLLAR BABY

After publishing each month's issue, check the staff roster and fire your weakest staff and hire better ones. There will always be higher-rated staff available, and more famous Bunnies to hire to staff your parties. As expenses go up, so will your income, and it won't take long before you have millions to splash. I mean splurge.



↑ It's just like the horse riding scene in Cruel Intentions... without the horse...



↑ It's not just sex, it's about feelings too. Honest.



↑ Snap nudie ladies without fear of being arrested!

» better staff, sexier playmates and buying more Sims-like improvements for the Mansion. Rinse, wash, repeat.

This simulation of running a monthly magazine is actually a fairly successful component of the game [*and disturbingly similar to our job here - Ed.*] You'll always be on the look out for a better article, sexier celebrity for the cover, more alluring centrefold, more insightful interview and so on; and as your market fluctuates you need to shuffle your content in order to keep the sales strong. It's actually quite addictive. And repetitive. Because success hinges on how well you entertain people, the repetitive nature of engaging yourself in "conversation" with the various characters starts to get a little tiresome, but this is offset to some degree by the specific story missions that add some humour. You might have to become best friends with a local politician in order to get a key character released from prison, introduce a shy musician to one of your playmates so that he has a muse for his work, or try to seduce a hot girl at a party and get it on in front of your



↑ The parable of the house built on silicone.

guests to perpetuate Hef's reputation as a playboy. Like *The Sims*, it's repetitive and shallow, but it's held together by the skin of its teeth with fun scenarios. The only drawback is that the animations start to loop after a while, and it's not long before you've seen your playmates' full repertoire of sexy poses. Of course, there's always the real-life centrefold pictures to unlock...

Bonus info

HOW'S YOUR HOMEWORK GOING?
At the end of every year, you get to choose your very own Playmate of the Year. Not that it really means anything. Just make sure to keep a finger poised over the "off" switch if you suspect your mum to walk in as you're "assessing" the photos.

The Summary



PLAYBOY: THE MANSION THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 Amusing and addictive - yet repetitive - relationship sim, ala *The Sims* or *The Urbz*.
- 2 Yes, there are bare breasts everywhere in the game. But are virtual women hot enough to float your boat? Not for long...
- 3 The business simulation of putting together Playboy magazine is surprisingly fun, but it won't take you long to master it.
- 4 The camera won't zoom in enough for most people's liking, and surrounding architecture tends to obscure the... err... view.
- 5 It sometimes feels like a giant interactive advertisement for Playboy magazine. Do you really care to learn trivia about the real Hef?

The Verdict

6.9 / 10

Surprisingly, there is an actual game in here, but it's not much more than a shadow of *The Sims* with naked women.

PREVIEWS: Incoming - Issue 37
COMING SOON: Hints, Issue 40



• Shoot him in the time crystals - it's gotta hurt!

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TimeSplitters: Future Perfect

Time gentlemen, please! Drink up your shooters...

Words: James Cottie

Dev: Free Radical Design	Pub: EA
Players: 4 Split, 2 Co-op	Live: 2-16 players
Players: 2-16 S-Link	Release: March 2005
http://eagames.co.uk/timesplitters	

ARCHAIR PSYCHOLOGISTS HAVE rich pickings when it comes to de-constructing British cultural identity. Now that they're no longer the masters of the Earth in the real world, post-colonial Brits compensate by becoming masters of time in space in sci-fi. Add to this notion a sense of humour about the patent absurdities introduced by time travel, and you get Dr. Who, or Slipstream, or one of the triumphs of the first person shooter genre, *TimeSplitters*.

Originally conceived as a rush-job launch-title for the PlayStation 2, *TimeSplitters* broke most of the rules of Next Gen grandstanding. There was no elaborate, cut-scene laden story, nor blockbuster license. There was very little beyond the rock solid multi-player modes, the expressive character designs, the huge arsenal and some catchy, if generic techno music. As it turned out, this was enough. Until *Halo* came along, *TimeSplitters* was arguably the best FPS on any home console.

With production schedules now measuring in years rather than months, Free Radical has had more leeway to build on the solid foundation of their franchise. With the third *TimeSplitters* game, these improvements fall into two main categories: things we expect (humour, cut-scenes, lip-synching) and things we don't (bizarre mini games, pseudo non-linear gameplay, risqué content).

The story revisits Man's epic struggle against the TimeSplitters - vaguely humanoid fiends that can warp through space and time: part Genestealers, part Displacer Beasts. Having rescued the nine Time Crystals in *TimeSplitters 2*, Space

Sergeant Cortez begins by whisking them away to the headquarters of the human forces. There the ravishing Dr. Anya installs them in a time machine, through which Cortez is flung in quantum leaps through key points in history. His mission is to investigate the origins of the crystals and the 'Splitters, and prevent either of them coming into existence if at all possible.

Cortez now not only speaks, but shoots his mouth off with the anti-panache of a wannabe action hero. His catchphrase, "It's time to split," is met with blank stares and bemusement; the real comedy value comes from the supporting characters. Anya's dry voice-overs are steady supply of guilty laughs, and waiting before slaying henchmen is rewarded with idle chatter that varies from the informative to the ribald. Cortez's allies prove to be a gaggle of self-serving sex maniacs, whose proclivities are daintily presented through double entendres and the like. The very young »



↑ Don't let this guy get close enough to tenderise your meat!

Bonus info

PICK-ME-UP
One of the items in your weapon inventory is a handy wrist-mounted gravity gun that can be used to pull remote levers and grab health, armour and weapons from inaccessible areas. You're only forced to use it a few times in the whole game though.



↑ Stop zombies by taking their heads off.

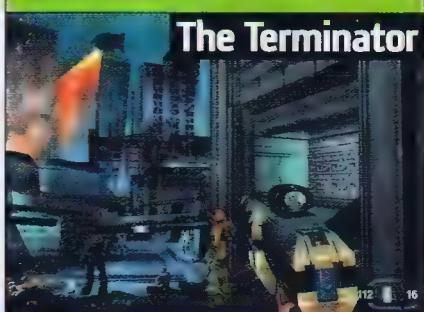


↑ Jacob Crow undergoes much biomodification.

NOW SHOWING...

Future Perfect is full of classic film references

THESE ARE just a few of the movie moments we spotted while playing - loads more await!



The Terminator

↑ In the Machine Wars level you have to help human resistance defeat the Ultranet robots.



The Matrix

↑ Help your sexy futuristic kung fu companion to hack into the evil corporation's mainframe.



The Temple of Doom

↑ Save your sidekick from being lowered into a flaming pit, chained to this dangling rack.



↑ Cortez goes third-person for ladder climbing.



↑ "Hi, have you seen a little fish called Nemo?"



↑ Man fixed guns during mini-game sections.



↑ Take down choppers easily with heatseekers.

» won't be offended, but the more you listen, the more you'll laugh.

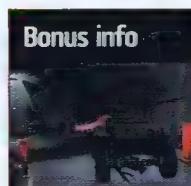
Levels follow a predictable structure. Whisked into a new time zone, Cortez is forced to abandon all the goodies he's collected from previous eras. He starts with his uplink - a gravity-gun with limitless ammo attached to his right arm - and an acquaintance who takes a short cut-scene to decide that this strangely dressed space marine would be a perfect ally in an armed assault on the nearby Scottish castle/haunted house/speeding train/etc.

The uplink serves three very handy functions that streamline the interface and the game experience. Holding down fire allows Cortez to lift any object, hold it in mid-air, and then hurl it away - just the ticket for a few 'physics puzzles' that are all the rage in the FPSs of today. Interestingly, this gun's alternate fire is one of the few in a FPS that's actually an 'alternative' to a firearm function - It produces a holographic map. More than anything else, the uplink is used to grabbing goodies that aren't in reach - a common problem in *Future Perfect*. Cortez, you see, can't jump. At all. It's a simple semiotic twist, being glued to the ground most of the time, and on those rare occasions when you need to reach for something on a shelf, the uplink is just a flick of the control pad away.

Other FPS novelties are used more sparingly.



↑ Throw Time Grenades to send enemies flying in a Bullet Time slow motion that affects everything but yourself.



GEARSHIFTERS
There are a number of vehicles to drive through *Future Perfect* including jeeps, tanks, flatbed trucks and, best of all, a giant robot that fires rockets. Driving sequences are generally quite short and steering controls are tricky due to the difficult camera, particularly when reversing.

A FRIEND IN NEED
There are numerous different companions who accompany you through significantly large sections of many levels. These include a '70s playboy, a teenage punk, a sentient robot,



a sexy assassin and your own future and past self. Sometimes you must protect them in mini-games.



↑ At many points you have to aid your future or past self in a retake of a section played earlier.

"Few games have embraced Xbox Live in such an enthusiastic clinch"

» Vehicles are a valid addition, but serve to be little more than shooting gallery exercises - like fixed machine gun emplacements - albeit on wheels. *Doom 3*'s voice-mail locker code hunting is thankfully nowhere in sight - an interactive terminal in the 1994 mission even pokes fun at such a mundane means of ammo hunting. A harried lab technician gets the code wrong several times, before eventually running out of time on the recording. There is no locker, of course, and no code. Ammo and weapons come from fallen baddies and imaginative searching, not repetitive, Pavlovian drudgery. This is a shooter, not *Space Quest VI*.

So who do you shoot? Villains, henchmen... even zombies and ghosts. No effort has been

spared in building the illusion of meaningful advancement through a living, breathing world, even though the path ahead is utterly linear. It's worth stressing that there's nothing wrong with a strong story in a game. When you're moving cautiously across the top of a moving train, your mind is gripped by the task at hand: making use of available cover and taking the fight to the jump-suited enemy. You never once pause to lament that the level is on rails (figuratively or literally).

One new feature that builds on this illusion is the ability to travel through time during a level and provide covering fire for yourself. This is of course another bit of trickery. The game isn't really recording your progress to emulate later in the level, nor can it see into the future to determine

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Bonus info**TALBOT TALENT**

Our very own Ben Talbot can be found in the credits of *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect* under the heading Additional Voice Talent. Ben had his screams recorded during a visit to the developers last year and his cries of simulated torment can be heard when enemies are set on fire. He refuses to recreate his screams for us in the office, but we're sure we can give him the right 'motivation'.

GO FLUX YOURSELF

Poor old Cortez doesn't have much luck with paradoxes and singularities, or whatever you call those moments in time travel where you alter the future for the worse. Ironically he keeps letting slip info to his enemies that give them the ideas for time travel and global domination in the first place. He should really learn to keep his wisecracks to himself.

CHARACTER ASSASSINATION

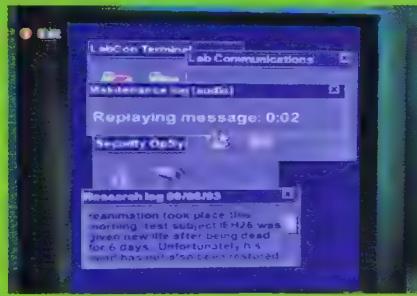
In the Arcade mode, the unlockable characters all introduce themselves with quirky statements. We particularly like the scientist who warbles in a very English accent, "it's time to unleash the arsekickulator" and then begins gibbering and rolling around on the floor.

GAME FOR A LAUGH Future Perfect spoofs its rivals

ONE OF THE ways in which this cheeky sequel gets away with being so derivative is to parody, or obviously mimic many other games in the shooter genre. We're sure you'll spot loads more and bring them to our attention, but here are a handful that stood out for us...



↑ Halo 2's Flood are very similar to these disgusting hybrids, who also explode on you.



↑ Doom 3's method of trawling PDA emails and audio logs for locker codes gets ribbed!



↑ Adopting a Half-Life-style scientist identity in the test lab, you're told "Your name is Gordon."



↑ In the zombie mansion, expect enemies to literally come out of the walls.



↑ Yes, the 'SLUT' T-shirt speaks for itself really.



↑ We just wish its tail didn't stand up!



↑ Aim for the gas bottle lodged in her jaws.

"Anyone who can claim boredom would probably yawn if fired at the moon on a great white shark"

» how you'll perform in the other role. It serves admirably, however, when it comes to increasing the tension. You must not only watch your own health, but that of "Future Cortez" (or "Past Cortez") as you continue with your blasting duties. It may sound corny and unnecessarily complicated, but it's

a real breath of fresh air in a gaming genre where few developers manage to work in original gameplay concepts.

Time warps come in other forms, too. "Time grenades" are introduced later in the game, giving you brief bouts of Bullet Time style action when faced with overwhelming odds. The villain of the piece - the cantankerous Professor Crow - meets Cortez at different ages in different eras, only serving to confuse our hero with utter non-sequiturs. It's funny because it doesn't make sense, but more importantly it helps build the impression of a universe on the brink of collapse. Crow's monkeying around with history has real consequences, and you get to see them unfold in real time (or a convincing facsimile thereof).

TimeSplitters: Future Perfect is not *Halo 3*. Free Radical did not set out to redefine game physics, or revolutionise graphical quality, or fit a finely sculpted episode into a grander narrative. The objective was to create a shooting game that's a lot of fun to play, and it's been fulfilled admirably. The single player game is compelling, the multi-player modes are rock solid and resplendent with options, and the addition of Live play opens up a new universe of mayhem.

We recommend it.



↑ Dance your monkeys too hard and they will unfortunately ignite.

The Summary**TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW**

- 1 This represents the state of the art for an old-school shooting experience. *TimeSplitters* fans will feel right at home with the format.
- 2 With level design and available weapons changing between time zones, *Future Perfect* feels like many games rolled into one.
- 3 Great sense of humour, and vivid, stylised character designs. Costumes are instantly aiding co-op and multiplayer victimisation.
- 4 Typical minion shooting alternates with pitched boss battles. Logic puzzles games are not a welcome inclusion, but they add to the mix.
- 5 Awesome, evocative music throughout to pull you in. Quite a feat in a game that touches on so many moods and styles.

The Verdict

A superb new FPS has entered the fray. Imaginative and vivacious, this is ideal for any shooting fan.

9.0 / 10

PREVIOUS Previews - Issues 35
COMING SOON Maps on the demo disc



↑ What are you waiting for? Shoot the barrel.



↑ It is possible to hack into enemy bots...



↑ ...but firing rockets at them is much more fun.

Project: Snowblind

Super-soldier goes nuts in the first credible rival to Halo 2

Words: Jon Brown

Dev: Crystal Dynamic	Pub: Eidos
Players: 1	Live: 2-16 players
Players: 2-16 SLink	Release: March 2005
www.projectsnowblind.com	

PROJECT: SNOWBLIND, so the story goes, started out life as member of the *Deus Ex* family, only to be ripped from its mother's bosom at an obscenely young age, then tossed into the street, mewling and puking, to fend for itself. *Project: Snowblind* finally having reached puberty, it now bears little or no resemblance to its parent title, the action-heavy meat-headedness a sharp contrast to ma's more considered role-playing-based blend of highbrow stealth action.

Project: Snowblind's storyline, a gumbo of Sci-Fi Channel space cobblers, is the second major difference between the two. Where *Deus Ex* titles pride themselves on their engaging plots, *Project: Snowblind*'s narrative comes over like a *Universal Soldier* film that Dolph Lundgren refused to make. It runs something like this: Nathan Frost (you) awakens from surgical procedure to discover that the government has fitted him with \$500m of high-tech nanotechnology. He's then rolled into combat by his superiors like a human bowling ball, his intended target being an evil-minded general with one eye on (wait for it) global domination. Thankfully, the plot knows its place in all this and refrains from ever impinging on the action. Our only serious complaint is that the cutscenes, though artfully directed, are a touch on the chunky side. In places you'll swear your Xbox has been transformed into a PlayStation 2 emulator. Blech.

Thankfully the game itself is far prettier than the cutscenes. Or at least it is in places. *Project: Snowblind*'s environments span the full breadth of

the imagination spectrum, from cardigan-grey corridors to a brilliantly oppressive prison block, complete with a bizarre indoor forest. If nothing else, *Project: Snowblind*'s location schizophrenia serves as the perfect incentive to play on: you never know what's waiting for you around the next corner... quite literally.

The other significant factor in persuading you to see *Project: Snowblind* through to its suitably overblown conclusion is the aforementioned nanotechnology, which is beautifully integrated into the gameplay. \$500m apparently goes a long way as far as military hardware goes, your equipment allowing four distinct advantages over your enemy (see Anatomy of a Super-Soldier, top right). And the best part is, you actually need to use all of this stuff if you're going to get by. It's up to you exactly which ability you use and where - pencil-armed weedlings will prefer to activate the cloaking device and crawl through missions unseen, while gun-happy fat-necks will flip the Bullet Time switch and take part in elaborately staged death-battles - just be aware that you'll always need to use something.

It's the sheer scale of the battles that makes nanotechnology such an essential piece of your arsenal. *Project: Snowblind* deals almost exclusively in large-scale shoot-outs, the number of combatants frequently reaching way, way, way into double figures. Occasionally you'll be squared into battle by half a dozen or so allied troops; more often than not you'll be left all on your lonesome, the shotgun in your paw your only companion.

All of which leads us by the sawn-off barrel to our second minor gripe: that on certain levels there isn't enough ammunition to go around. We've lost count of the number of times we've had to put our current objective on hold while we sniffed around, head down, looking for more bullets. Granted, it isn't a major problem, it just strikes us as something of an oversight that a game with the mentality of »



Bonus info

WHITE NOISE

Due to the fact that you're half-man, half-machine, the enemy can interfere with your instruments at any time. The screen will fill with eye-grating static and, at times like this, your only option is to run and hide.



↑ Deploy Spider-Bots and distract your enemy.



↑ If in doubt, toss a flashbang around the corner and leave 'em all squinting.

ANATOMY OF A SUPER-SOLDIER An idiot's guide to nanotechnology



Vision Boost

What does it do? The Vision Boost uses thermal imaging technology to highlight your enemies. It also allows you to see your foe through walls.

When can I use it? Either, a) during large gun battles, or b) before opening doors. Needless to say, Vision Boost is the best friend of the stealthy player.



Reflex Boost

What does it do? The rather useful Reflex Boost slows down time for a limited period, allowing you to run rings around your sloth-like enemy.

When can I use it? Whenever you're seriously outnumbered. Equip yourself with a shotgun, flip on the Reflex Boost and you're as good as invincible.



Ballistic Shield

What does it do? Provide you with a near-impenetrable shield against enemy attack. Unfortunately, the more flak you take, the faster it runs out.

When can I use it? When you're up against large vehicles such as this surprisingly argumentative helicopter. Remember: you still have to dodge missiles.



Invisibility

What does it do? Take a guess. Yup. Got it in one. Just because you're invisible, however, doesn't mean they won't be able to hear you. So move slowly.

When can I use it? When you're all out of ammo. Which, we hasten to add, is a predicament you'll find yourself in fairly regularly, more's the pity.



↑ Out of ammunition? Then head on over to your local gun emplacement.



↑ Only heavy explosives and EMP grenades can stop this military tank.



↑ For every dazzling location there's a corridor.



↑ Do what you can to avoid injuring your allies.



↑ When shielded, these guards are rock solid.

Bonus info

THE EX-FACTOR

Deus Ex: Clan Wars was to be the full title, presumably by way of reference to Project: Snowblind's Live modes. Check back with OXM next month for the full rundown on its hugely impressive online capabilities.

CAN'T HACK IT?

Hacking into the surveillance equipment is a key part of Project: Snowblind. Players who don't take the time to disable security cameras will find it significantly more difficult than those who do, so always keep an eye out for vacated computer terminals.

Bonus info

SAVING GRACE

The absence of a quick-save function means you have to treat each combat situation with a great deal of care. That said, if you do run out of health, you're sometimes given the opportunity to revive yourself by activating a nano-boost device.

» Schwarzenegger's rottweiler should contain fewer bullets than your average bag of lollies.

At this juncture it's worth pointing out that when Project: Snowblind isn't impressing you with its fancy lighting effects or futuristic weapons, it's actually a very old-fashioned title indeed. In terms of mission objectives, it very rarely ventures out of pull-switch-find-door territory, while the inclusion of an on-screen radar that helpfully points out your next waypoint only serves to lessen the level of engagement required. The tragic thing is that when the game does try to do something different, like during the spectacular prison-break mission, it achieves the near-impossible by casting a small shadow over *Halo 2* (Issue 34, 10.0). Sadly, no sooner have the stakes been raised than the following mission, a typically run-of-the-mill affair, has lowered them again.

That Project: Snowblind remains a near-essential purchase for card-carrying action fans in spite of this innovation shortfall is a testament to just how strong it is in other areas. The artificial intelligence is impressive throughout, while the



↑ The Vision Boost is ideal when visibility is low.

single-player campaign, which hardens faster than 4-Unit math, represents a very serious challenge indeed. The standard caveat applies – only go here once you've fully exhausted everything in *Halo 2* – but so long as you go into it fully aware that it's unlikely to change your life beyond the next weekend, Project: Snowblind will gently rock your world.

The Summary

PROJECT: SNOWBLIND THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 Nanotechnology is brilliantly integrated into the gameplay; you must constantly adapt your playing style to match the challenge at hand.
- 2 Brilliant level design occasionally let down by the odd expanse of colourless industrial nothingness. More colour wouldn't have hurt.
- 3 A perfectly naff storyline keeps the whole thing ticking over nicely without ever interfering with the gameplay.
- 4 The combination of large-scale shoot-outs and intimate gun-battles helps to sustain your interest during the middle third of the campaign.
- 5 Take away the nanotechnology and you're left with a very old-fashioned game. Mission objectives lack sufficient level of variety.

The Verdict

8.4 / 10

Manages to establish itself as the next best thing to you-know-what without ever looking like a serious rival.

PREVIOUSLY: First Look - Issue 30, Excl. Access - Issue 35
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 40



Star Wars: Republic Commando

Saviours of the galaxy wanted, Jedi need not apply

Words: Ben Lawrence

Dev: LucasArts	Pub: LucasArts
X Players: 1-2-4 Split	X Live: 2-16 players
X Players: 2-4 SLink	X Release: Out now
www.lucasarts.com	

IT IS A time of great celebration in Lucas Valley. The games unleashed from the bearded one's empire used to be of variable quality, but they've recently crept into 'outstanding' territory. First we had a double helping of that 4,000-year-old RPG stuff to wrap our grey matter around, and now we get this little beauty. It's the polar opposite of all that dialogue-based soul-searching and Jedi hocus-pocus, but boy oh boy, is it good. And there's not a single lightsaber in sight.

Republic Commando is no normal FPS, despite its fairly run 'n' blast appearance. It borrows heavily from *Full Spectrum Warrior*'s (Issue 28, 8.9) breathless tactical forward-thinking gameplay, just as it happily picks over *Halo*'s (Issue 34, 10.0) sense of epic storytelling (although never matches it, naturally). There are claustrophobic *Doom 3* (Issue 38, 9.2) moments stuck in conduits and corridors creeping with death, and there are elements of *Aliens* thrown in for that extra zesty 'soldiers in shit' touch. In fact, *Republic Commando* is as much about the survival and comradeship of your four-man squad as it is about killing aliens. The brothers - Boss, Scorch, Fixer and Sev - act as individuals when required, but work best as a cohesive unit. They are the most vital weapon in the game and are



Well-placed headshots incapacitate droids.

devastatingly intelligent. And the AI? God knows where LucasArts got it from, but it's flawless. Not once did the characters get in our line of fire or act in any way to suggest AI oversights or corner cutting. Their swift, surgical approach to combat has to be seen to be believed. And, better still, whenever you want to take control of them, they obey.

With a simple order system controlled solely through looking at something on screen and pressing 'A', the right person for the job instinctively goes and does whatever it was you'd hope they'd do. If you want a door breached, a mine laid, or a droid dispenser 'dealt with', the AI reads your mind and goes off to do its job. Not once did the AI fail us, and that's fantastic.

Levels also make damned sure we make good use of the squad, throwing us into what would surely be no-win situations if guns and blasters were our sole dependence. By a quick assessment of the situation and a few barked orders to the men, we were mounting turrets, holding back seas of >>

Bad Boys A quick introduction to your squad

DELTA 38 'BOSS'

Even among clones, Three-Eight is leader of the Deltas. Three-Eight has earned the respect and loyalty of his squad, and he repays that dedication in strong leadership. A jack of all trades, he can turn his hand to any task. This is the guy we play as.



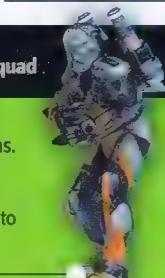
DELTA 07 'SEV'

Some soldiers fight because they have to; others, like Oh-Seven, fight because they like it. Most of the time he's a coldly efficient killer with a grim sense of humour. But when things get hairy, he gets scary.



DELTA 62 'SCORCH'

Delta's resident wiseass, regularly dropping one-liners and quips during the stew of violence and destruction that serves as the Deltas' steady diet. An excellent explosives technician, Six-Two has an overdeveloped sense of irony that could be mistaken for fatalism.



Bonus info

GET 'EM OFF!

Don't let scavenger droids latch onto your helmet. They'll send your visuals crazy (as you can see from this intentionally awful screenshot), and they'll try drilling into your head too.



STAND AROUND

Spend too long in one place and your squad soon gets bored of hanging around. They'll complain of itchy trigger fingers and ask you why they're not moving out. Try shooting them and they either duck or run for cover. Clever lads.

GEO GUNS

The best way to kill Geonosians is with their own dropped weaponry. Try picking up the Geonosian plasma gun which fires *Ghostbusters*-style beams into the air. It has crab legs attached to the side which click when fully powered up, but don't let them put you off.

Birth of a Clone

AND THEY even change your nappies as well.

1



↑ Our first glimpse of life is inside a Kamino birthing tank, being cared for by our long-necked alien mother. Like Celine Dion's first delivery.

2



↑ Next we're at school learning our wares. Look either side to see our classmates are in fact, identical to us. It's spooky, but a nice touch.

3



↑ Then it's on to a shooting range when we'll learn to blast targets. Stormtroopers in later generations obviously forego this area of training.

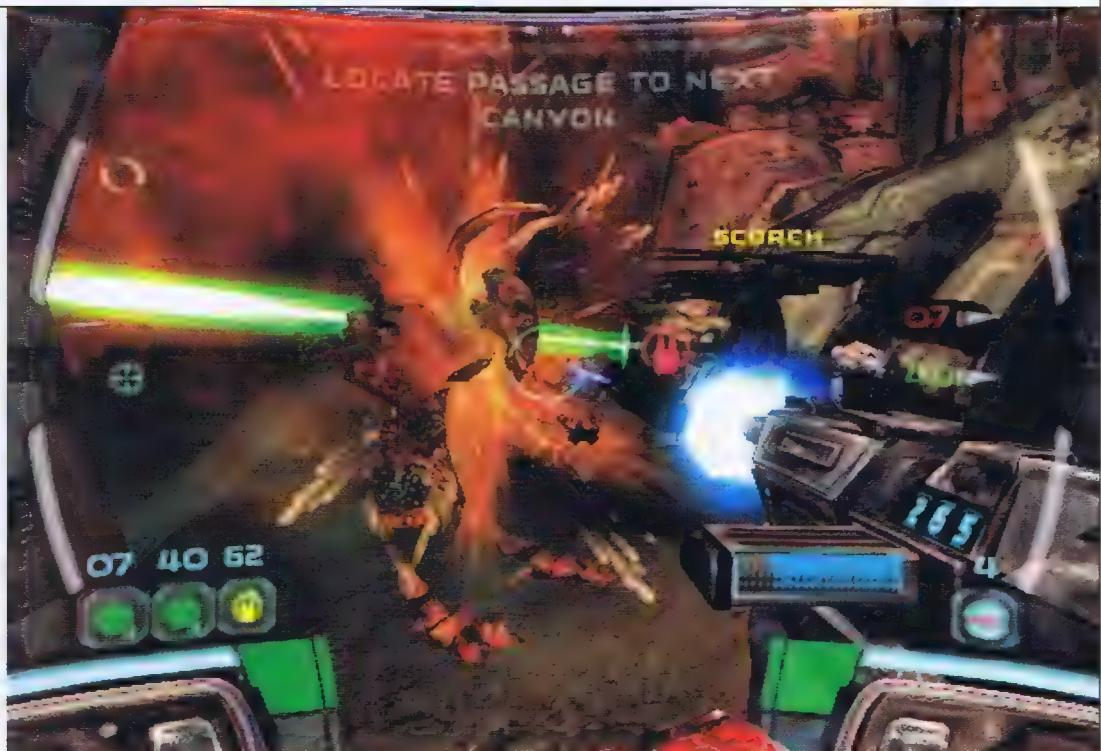
4



↑ This is it: helmet time. Like Master Chief, we never find out the exact identity of the clones. We reckon they all look like Bob Carolees.

» droids that would seek to flank us, and, by the skin of our clone teeth, managing to somehow secure success. It's bastard hard in parts, but thinking on your feet will get you through where blasting will only get you fried.

Aesthetically the levels could have done with a little more invention and quantity. Geonosis, an abandoned Separatist ghost ship, and Wookiee planet Kashyyyk are our lot, and despite the epic scale of each, *Star Wars* is so rich with worlds and cultures, it's a shame more wasn't made of it. What we do get through, is attention paid to the smallest aspects which are, like the AI, flawless. Lighting, particle and character physics are all exemplary.



↑ With simple commands your squad will be able to attack enemies from all sides and render onslaughts redundant.



↑ Bleugh... a Geonosian blaster - with legs!



↑ Droids combust when given a good blasting.

Seemingly trivial squad banter manages not only to add exposition and explanation to situations, but fleshes out the team beyond the obvious two dimensions, and the score is movie standard.

Some might piss and whinge that LucasArts has effectively recreated a simplified *Full Spectrum Warrior* in space (only with the ability to actually shoot) then felt compelled to label it *Star Wars*. There are very few indications that this is actually a galaxy 'far, far away' save for a few Wookiees and stray R2 units, but none of this matters. The experience treads that fine balance between shooter and strategy so well, that any non-*Star Wars* moments (shotguns and pistols in space, *purlease!*) are easily forgiven. It may not even be that original in the big scheme of things, especially as it borrows the juicy bits from just about everything else we've played, but it does so with such relish and panache that that too is completely forgivable. A clone it may be, but a clone of merit nonetheless. Take a bow George, you've done it again.



↑ A briefing occurs before every mission thanks to your hologram PDA.

"It borrows the juicy bits from just about everything else we've played"

Bonus info

The Summary

STAY AWAY IF YOU DON'T WANT EPISODE III SPOILERS. DON'T BUY THIS GAME JUST YET. GENERAL GRIEVOUS'S HENCHMEN MAKE A DEVASTATING APPEARANCE LATER IN THE GAME.

STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 Some of the smartest AI we've ever experienced. You'll love these lads by the time you come out the other end of the war.
- 2 It looks good enough to lick from top to toe. The strength is in the tiny details and there are enough to fill a Bantha's pouch. Probably.
- 3 That score! Did John Williams specifically request to write it? It's epic, sweeping, timely and speckles the skin with goosebumps it's so good.
- 4 Hmm... the locations aren't what we'd call inspiring, but at least they're made good use of. More in the sequel please.
- 5 It lacks any kind of originality. But hey, it's a 'clone' which, in a funny way, kinda excuses it. That and the great AI, of course.

The Verdict

An amalgamation of every quality shooter but one that works so well and is so much fun to play it's forgivable.

9.0 / 10

PREVIOUSLY News - Issues 28 & 35
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 40

FIFA Street

Take a wicked walk through the streets of inflated wage

Dev: EA Big	Pub: EA
Players: 1-4	Live: None
Release: March 2005	
www.easportbig.com/games/fifastreet	

Words: Kevin Cheung

REMEMBER THE OLD Nike ads where the world's soccer celebrities like Zidane and Cantona played a small fantasy soccer match in a tiny cage? It wasn't soccer in the strict sense of the word, but damn it looked good. And that's what *FIFA Street* is all about: lightning-fast four-on-four soccer inside a cage with no rules, off-the-wall rebounds, outrageous sprints, tackles, through-balls, lobs, headers and Shaolin Soccer-inspired super-strokes that stop short of blasting the goalie's clothes clean off.

Out in the cage, players can build up their Combo meter by performing successive Beat moves to get around defenders. Once the meter is built up, you can unleash a ground-splitting strike that'll either find the back of the net or turn the goalie into a crumpled heap on the ground for a few seconds (giving you enough time to pot the ball in for a score). Most games are won by being the first team to reach five goals; but tournaments will put players through properly timed matches.

The crucial element for sports fans is the ability to build up player stats like running speed, shot power, accuracy, defence and so on. These stats can be built up with Skill Bills that are accumulated

through each match, and they can also be used to purchase new players, clothing and entry into new tournaments.

FIFA Street is not suited for the stuck up soccer elite who think the ball physics and overall concept are an affront to the world game. It's very arcade-like in handling and most of the passes, lobs and power-strokes defy the laws of reality. But if you're willing to accept that, *FIFA Street* is more like a blend of futsal and *Speedball* with a slightly misplaced hip-hop flavour. Great for a few solid weekends of play.



↑ Build up your combo bar and it'll helpfully tell you to S-H-O-O-T. Thanks.



↑ Rooney unleashes one from distance straight into the top corner. Again.



↑ A lack of a ref (and rules) lets you hack away.

The Verdict

7.6 / 10

Excellent fun, albeit a tad Americanised – which we just can't understand, considering it's an English sport.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2: BattleNexus

What's that smell? The turtles head out once again

Dev: Mirage Studios	Pub: Konami
Players: 1-4	Live: None
Release: March 2005	
www.ninjaturtles.com	

Words: Andy Irving

FLUSHING TURTLES down the toilet, just like producing average beat 'em up adaptations, doesn't get rid of heroes in a half shell; they come back stronger. This is good news for flippered fans, because *BattleNexus* fills in what was missing from the last Xbox *Turtles* title (Issue 28, 6.3).

The same excitable cutscenes that advance the storyline return, along with the cel-shaded graphics, albeit with a nifty polish. The biggest improvement is the ability to now play with all four characters simultaneously as opposed to the first game's two-player monotony. Four-way co-op is infinitely more enjoyable and harks back to the fun of the arcade original. Which is, brilliantly, an unlockable extra.

Another top touch is the ability to cycle through each turtle at any point. Players must use each character during certain situations to solve puzzles or defeat specific enemies. While not massively expanding gameplay, this does offer limited variation through the otherwise tepid and railed environments. Limited we say, because unfortunately the similar enemies make for some very repetitive hacking 'n' slashing. Replayability is another factor, with players

able to pick their way through the branching story and retry any unlocked area with a different turtle to get maximum point ratings and unlock the goodies. However, monotony may soon set in after the third time through the same finger-burning level.

Controls are pleasingly simple, but the camera will often confusingly zoom in and out of the action at random, and can't be rotated either. Factor in the beat 'em up style *BattleNexus* and *Turtles 2* makes for a slight improvement on the original game.



↑ Why hide their faces but not their modesty? That never made sense...



↑ Donatello's special attack is great against multiple enemies.



↑ Every turtle has a ranged attack ability.

The Verdict

6.4 / 10

Four-way co-op and branching story make this marginally more than just a sequel, but it's still repetitive button-bashing.



The Bard's Tale

Beard becomes Bard by dropping an 'e'

Words: Andy Irving

Dev: inXile	Pub: THQ
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: March 2005	
www.thebardstale.com	

WHEN WAS the last time you laughed out loud at a game? Ours was during the opening tutorial of *The Bard's Tale*. We stumbled into a typically drunk group of NPCs in a typically clichéd inn after learning the central character's typically clichéd past. You see where we're going here? But for all its referential attributes, the resulting drunken ballad (which players can sing along to with bouncing ball) allayed any fears of fairytale familiarity. This is one of the most self-deprecating games we've ever seen. And you thought *The Princess Bride* was a pisstake.

Everyone loves the class joker, but *Bard's Tale* packs a decent enough punch to keep the bullies away as well. It uses *Baldur's Gate*'s Snowblind engine and, like a coin-slot peep show, the action's strictly top down. The Bard must travel the land, conversing with a host of colourful characters and completing quests, though, as he points out, coin and cleavage are his driving motives. The game is very dialogue heavy, though players' conversations aren't quite as branching as we'd like. The Bard occasionally has the option of choosing friendly or hostile responses, though these are denoted by happy and sad faces; we'd like to see what we're actually going to say before choosing. Also, more often than not, the conversation ends the same way, regardless of your responses. However, they impact brilliantly on the gameplay, as a previously irked character may reappear several hours into the game and deny you a quest or opportunity. There's no clear-cut right or wrong either, so players have a refreshing amount of freedom in their choices.

Speaking of which, quests are your standard RPG fare. Go here, talk to them, go and collect this, learn this spell etc, though *Bard's Tale* isn't afraid to mock even its own predictability. The Bard often turns to the camera to comment on the cheesiness of his situation, lamenting "All these tales are all the same." The narrator, with his home counties diction, is continually at odds with the Bard's swaggering cockney slang, and the constant bickering between the two provides many of the game's laughs.

Combat is obviously determined by a hit points system, though is thankfully in real time rather than being turn based. Players can buy tons of weapons and armour upgrades from the store, or use the Bard's magical capabilities in battle. Levelling up allows players to upgrade the Bard's physical capabilities, and you're also given a chance to hone specific skills, like dual wielding. As you progress you'll learn new spells, executed via the Bard's lute. These can be aggressive or protective in nature, though we found ourselves continually summoning a spiritual ally to fight alongside us, thus doubling our chances in combat. Cheap maybe, but with an endless supply of magical power, an easy option.

However, while the emphasis has been put into the game's comical touches, the graphics have been left to suffer. We monkeys may hear no evil but we certainly see a fair bit here. Okay, the game was developed a while ago (it's been in publishing limbo for the last couple of years) but it still looks inexplicably rough, in both character animation and environment design. The camera is slow to rotate, and has a disappointingly small zoom ability, though at least at that distance the characters still look acceptable.

If you can ignore this, you'll really enjoy *The Bard's Tale*. Not afraid to poke fun at itself or the genre, the game still has enough depth and replayability to please the most ardent RPG fans. When it's not mocking them...

Bonus info

A MAN'S BEST FRIEND
Early on in the game you'll meet a yappy little dog. Befriend him, and he'll stay by your side for the entire game. Although not very strong, the little tyke does a good job of distracting opponents during combat.



The Summary

THE BARD'S TALE THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- Hilarious dialogue and a fine sense of self-deprecation make this one of the most humorous games we've played in a long time.
- All the regular staples of an RPG are here: tons of quests, characters and conversations to get stuck into. A fair bit of replayability too.
- A host of items and weapons to collect, loads of magic to learn, and the honing of different skills make for tons of gameplay options.
- Not the prettiest game in the world; the characters are rough and undetailed, while the environments are bland and uninteresting.
- The camera is a bit of an issue - it's too far enough away from the action to be involving. Annoyingly long load times between areas too.

The Verdict

Not as expansive or visually impressive as other RPGs, but has enough of a unique and refreshing approach to be absorbing.

7.5 / 10

PREV | ONLY Issue 22 - News
COMING SOON Hints - Issue 40



Tak 2: Staff of Dreams

It could be the 'stuff' of great adventure, or an animated TV series...

Words: Asher Moses

Dev: Avalanche	Pub: THQ
Players 1-2	Live: None
Release: Out now	
www.tak2game.com	

Once upon a time 3D platform games were more common than teenagers at Michael Jackson's house, but unfortunately the likes of *Sonic* and *Mario* - much like Jacko himself - are fading into pop culture oblivion. Although titles like *Voodoo Vince* and *Blinx* have attempted to fill the void, it's painfully obvious that the platforming era has seen better days. That's why Avalanche Software's *Tak 2: Staff of Dreams* is spearheading yet another attempt at revitalizing the genre, following on directly after the events of *Tak and the Power of Juju*.

Aimed towards a younger audience, *Tak 2*'s plot is as clichéd as it is satirical. The game's protagonist, Tak, sets off on a quest to save a princess from the menacing "dream guardian." As expected, the game's environments are rich with



↑ Saturated, vibrant colours never disappoint.

vibrant colours and highly imaginative characters. They include Lok, a ridiculous warrior who joins Tak on his journey. Speaking of humour, much of the dialogue in the game is simple enough to garner a few giggles from young children, but there are a number of references that adults will appreciate as well. This is a refreshing diversion from the current crop of games that take themselves too seriously, and is the reason for the original being a success.

Yet beneath this surface of colour and cuddly superheroes is a surprisingly engaging game. *Tak 2* has phased out the monotonous routine of item collection that was so prevalent in Tak's original adventure; in its stead is a steady stream of combat, platform-jumping and, most importantly, puzzle-solving. There are still some collectibles, but they aren't pivotal to success and only serve to unlock additional goodies like mini-games - which in turn are enjoyable asides to the main plot.

Combat is simple yet entertaining. Tak can learn new moves as he progresses, but they offer more visual flair than actual substance. Tak's basic club-thumping attack will, after all, obliterate most enemies with relative ease. Similarly, puzzles are unsophisticated, repetitive and scarcely challenging, involving little more than placing explosive barrels near gates or hitting an out-of-reach button with a ranged weapon.

As a consolation, these flaws are somewhat made up for by a plethora of original gameplay elements, such as navigating river rapids in a barrel or morphing into an animal.

Finally, like most platform games, the control layout in *Tak 2* is both simple and intuitive, but the jittery camera controls will no doubt frustrate most players as it frequently becomes stuck on walls and other objects.

Tak 2 won't pose a challenge to the seasoned gamer, but as a Nickelodeon-branded game that's targeted towards children, it has the colour, control and humour to be immensely popular.

Bonus info



PRETTY PICTURES
A variety of surroundings including the Woodlands, Mountain Highlands, The River, The Geo-Thermal Region, Mangrove Swamp, the Dream World, Planetarium, Dream Temple and the Inner Sanctuary engage the player's imagination and allow for a diverse yet vibrant colour palette

The Summary



TAK 2: STAFF OF DREAMS THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 An enjoyable platformer with rich, vibrant environments and humorous characters.
- 2 Gameplay that moves away from obsessive item-collection and more towards puzzle-solving and combat.
- 3 Frustratingly simplistic puzzles and enemies that are easily dealt with - ideal for a younger audience.
- 4 A clichéd, yet satirical story-line involving the rescue of a princess from the evil "dream guardian."
- 5 Intuitive control system marred by a poor camera implementation that frequently becomes stuck behind objects and walls.

The Verdict

6.6 / 10

A witty, entertaining revival of the 3D platform genre, but its simplicity relegates it solely to the realm of younger gamers.

PREVIEWS: Tak's been prancing through our Gallery before.
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 41

Constantine

In the Countdown to Armageddon, we'll have a Constantine please, Carol

Words: Andy Irving

Dev: Bits Studios	Pub: SCi
Players 1	Live: None
Release: March 05	
www.atari.com.au	

GOD WORKS IN pretty mysterious ways, doesn't He? Far be it from us to question the all-knowing One, but choosing Keanu Reeves to save humanity from the imminent arrival of the son of Satan? Well, not Reeves personally, but his on-screen persona John Constantine (himself an original DC comics demigod), in this tie-in of the upcoming blockbuster movie. Like, *whoaaah*, God dude.

It seems every movie tie-in these days has a strict mandate: be an accessible, third-person actioner, with a simple lock-on aim function for firing. Throw in some locations from the movie, add a bit of artistic licence with the weapons and script (something about demons walking the Earth during the eternal battle of good and evil), and job done. Oh, and the original actor's vocal talent. If you can afford it. Which *Constantine* unfortunately couldn't. But for all its vocal shortcomings, *Constantine* easily fulfills the rest of this mandate with ease and panache, and still manages to squeeze a fair few neat little touches up its ruffled sleeve.

Hell isn't our preferred destination after this life but we have to admit, according to *Constantine* it looks pretty damned cool. In an alternate version of downtown LA, fiery winds provide the driving force for a very impressive physics engine that tosses derelict cars around like tin cans. Fireballs rain from the sky, decimating your surroundings, and there's a gleeful sense of chaos about the place. It's a

shame then, that the environments of the other half of the game, set in present day Los Angeles, though gritty and noirish, seem drab and uninteresting in comparison.

What these contrasting conditions do provide however, is a fantastic sense of atmosphere. Although not on par with the stylish *Max Payne 2* (Issue 25, 9.2), the real world is full of creepy shadows and includes more than a few genuinely jumpy moments. Constantine has the ability to flick back and forth between dimensions, and alter either world to benefit his tasks in the other. Your True Sight ability acts like a twisted thermal vision which, complete with brilliantly disturbing audio, allows players to see demons masquerading as humans and hidden magical items too.

Aside from all the weapon-based combat (which is fun despite a slightly unpredictable camera), Constantine has the ability to cast spells. These are learnt through exploration of the fairly free-roaming environment, along with numerous other health and magic upgrades. These are fun to execute and are varied in nature - our favourite was Hunger, which caused the flesh to be stripped from a possessed human by a swarm of vicious flies. Although ridiculously easy to perform (players must complete a simple button sequence within a time limit), they'll leave your character annoyingly exposed to counter attack during the time it takes to cast. Because of this, they can only be used when enemies are at a safe distance - not ideal when you're in the middle of white-of-the-eyes combat.

However, factor in a healthy helping of puzzles (which again are fun, but hampered by an erratic camera), and *Constantine* is a fairly tidy little movie tie-in. Not as hallowed-groundbreaking or biblical in goodness that it maybe thinks it is, but 'constantly' enjoyable all the same.



Bonus info



WHO'S THE BOSS?
Constantine frequently encounters boss demons along his travels. They're normally harder than algebra, so instead of blasting away, take a moment (or check your notes) to find their weak spots.



↑ Cast powerful spells for the perfect strike.



↑ JC gets hot under the collar with huge snakes.



↑ True Sight reveals demons walking the earth.



↑ Watch as impressive physics trash hell.



↑ "Oh what a fee-ling, when there's demons on the ceiling..." Constantine puts the world to rights with his trusty Crucifier gun.

The Summary

CONSTANTINE: THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 Stylish and atmospheric, the game provides both action packed and early sparse environments that look faithful to the upcoming movie.
- 2 Weapon-based combat is fun and accessible with a handy lock-on, though slow character movement makes the action seem sluggish.
- 3 True Sight adds another dimension to the gameplay and, as well as looking pretty, is essential to completing tasks.
- 4 More puzzles than a retirement home's coffee table and sporadic boss battles mix up the relentless run and gun action.
- 5 For the most part, the camera is well behaved, though it can sometimes dance around demonically in the most annoying manner.

The Verdict

Accomplished movie adaptation which won't exactly set the world alight, but is amiable fun to work through.

7.5/10

PREVIOUSLY: Issue 35 - Preview
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 40



↑ Knockout replays are especially brutal.



↑ From weedy streak of pee to fisticuffs master.



↑ The control system is amazing. Sweet dodges!



↑ The facial damage model is still superb. Bosh!

Fight Night Round 2

Seconds out... it's round two for the boxing game with more bite than Tyson

Words: Graeme Boyd

Dev: EA Sports	Pub: EA
Players: 1-2	Live: None
Release: March 2005	
www.easports.com/games/fightnightround2/home	

HAVE YOU EVER been properly punched? Ever felt a full-on, cheekbone-shattering, nose-bending wallop straight to the boat race? If not, you'll discover how it feels when you suck up one of *Fight Night Round 2*'s new Haymaker punches. These brutal blows rock the camera like a car crash, land with a 'CRUNCH' sound so gruesome it'd give a pathologist the dry heaves, and usually introduce your boxer's arse to the mat. Good night.

Fight Night Round 2's sweet presentation jams the block-rocking power of these punches into your eye sockets, but it's the truly awesome Total Punch Control that makes them hurt so much. Controlled pops and twists of the Right analogue stick unleash stinging jabs, neck-snapping hooks and chin-disintegrating uppercuts, while holding the triggers let you block, bob and weave with ease.



↑ Loads of licensed boxers pull on their gloves.

Haymakers are powered-up punches. Adding rotation to your stick twist puts extra hot sauce on your glove, sending the crowd wild and rebooting your opponent's brainframe instantly. It's brutal, it's vicious, and we love it.

Unfortunately, the Haymaker system is *Fight Night Round 2*'s only important new addition. Being able to control your Cutman (the poor bloke who has to clean up flesh that's been reduced to rotten mince) is a nice extra, but it's really just a simple mini-game between rounds.

The Career mode in particular could have done with an overhaul. True, you now have to fight your way through the amateur ranks wearing one of those padded nugget-nappies, but since you can't upgrade your stats until you turn pro it's really just a glorified tutorial.

Once you're slugging it out as a pro you can start spending cash on new equipment, entrance effects, and bikini-clad girls. But that's all just show - to really make it to the top you have to train. Funny enough *Round 2*'s training mini-games aren't as good as last year's. Weightlifting is cool - you have to use the analogue sticks to drag up heavy stacks - but the Combo Dummy and Heavy Bag are just dull.

Progressing up the rankings until you're sporting a fancy new belt is fun and there are plenty of unlockables, but ultimately it's just a procession of similar fights. Xbox Live support would have been a great way to give the career mode some real punch... ah well, maybe next year.

Still, the boxing action hits like a heavyweight while also offering deep, strategic gameplay for the true ringmaster. Things really rumble in two-player mode, where bouts evolve into ridiculously tense face-offs more like chess than a messy scrap outside the pub. *Fight Night 2004* (Issue 27, 8.6) was the jab that opened our defences and *Round 2* is the sucker punch follow-up. Hopefully next year's edition will be the knockout blow.

Bonus info



ALL'S SWELL

Thanks to *Fight Night Round 2*'s stunning facial damage, your boxer's mush will soon look like a butcher's slab. Luckily you can now repair the damage by, um, moving the analogue sticks. Essential, but not exactly riveting.

The Summary



FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 2 THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 Solid gold EA Sports presentation with sweet tunes, superb visuals, crunching sound effects and top commentary.
- 2 Total Punch Control rules - like Tiger Woods' analogue swing rules golf games, this is the only way to box.
- 3 Haymaker punches and bloody facial damage effects add even more brutality to the hard-hitting bouts.
- 4 Plenty to unlock in Career mode but training is dull and some new features would have added variety.
- 5 Great in two-player, but Xbox Live play would make up for a short list of game modes.

The Verdict

Succumbs to the EA Sports curse of not adding enough improvements, but *Round 2* is still a worthy king of the ring.

8.4 / 10

PREV | NEXT | NEWS - ISSUE 38
COMING SOON: Hints - ISSUE 40

Rugby 2005

Thirty angry men? One ball? Must be time for an EA rugby game then

Words: Martin Korda

Dev: EA/HB Studios	Pub: EA
Players: 1-4	Live: None
Release: March 2005	
www.easports.com/articles/05/rugby2005pr.jsp	

AH RUGBY, the game of toothless oafs, private school students and men who love cupping oval balls. A game of grit, determination, and chronic sports injuries. Of course, it doesn't have to be this painful, thanks to EA's yearly update of its official Rugby Union-licensed game, imaginatively called *Rugby 2005*, now sprinting onto Xbox for the first time. Who could have seen that coming, eh?

So what's new? Well, for starters, this Xbox offering sports all-new player models and animations, which help create a far greater sense of authenticity than before, with bone-bending tackles, fearsome mauls and balletic dives for the try line now replicated in realism-packed glory. The atmosphere has also been ramped up, with accurate crowd chants and improved stadium effects that further add to the immersion.

But what's it like as a simulation of legal grievous bodily harm? Well, you know what? It's pretty damned good. Games genuinely feel like the real thing, with countless punts arcing into touch, smooth passing moves flowing across the back line and brutal rucks savagely contested by hulking cauliflower-eared forwards. Best of all is the game's intelligent use of the play on rule, meaning that matches flow smoother than beer at a victory party.

The AI is also impressive, reading the game with lifelike intelligence, while each carefully recreated international team displays the kind of



↑ Some tackles are so brutal they almost lift you out of your underpants.

ability you'd associate with their real-life counterparts. The green-as-grass Italians and Americans are easy to steamroll, but the savvy Aussies and Kiwis prove a far harder proposition, fizzing the ball around the park while forming formidable defensive lines.

The game simply spills over with tournaments, and you can try your hand at anything from the Six Nations to the World Cup. It won't be long before you've mastered the art of combining your backs and forwards to devastating effect, though sadly, kicking during open play and line-outs is clumsy and unclear, and stealing possession can often be frustratingly difficult. Overall though, *Rugby 2005* is a triumph, and had it not been for these few clumsy fumbles, it could have been a world-beater. As close to the real thing as you're likely to get without strapping on a groin guard.

Bonus info

JUST LIKE ME

If you fancy adding yourself and your mates to a team's roster, then you'll be pleased to know that an easy-to-use and powerful player creation tool allows you to fashion lumbering boors of all shapes and sizes, and put them into any team or position you want.



↑ New player models add to the game's realism.



↑ And that's how Maradona invented rugby.



↑ Where would we be without the trusty scrum?



↑ That looks a bit like a game of netball.



↑ All of the international teams and tournaments are present and correct.

The Summary

RUGBY 2005 THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 Excellent new animations and improved stadium and crowd effects make for a brutally immersive experience.
- 2 A host of tournaments to play in, and an abundance of teams to play as or against keep things varied and fresh.
- 3 Impressively lifelike AI plays the game realistically, yet the free-flowing play ensures it's always fun.
- 4 A lack of clear control during rucks and mauls means that turning over play is a rarity.
- 5 Kicking during open play is clumsy and unclear, while line-outs are unresponsive and overly hard to master.

The Verdict

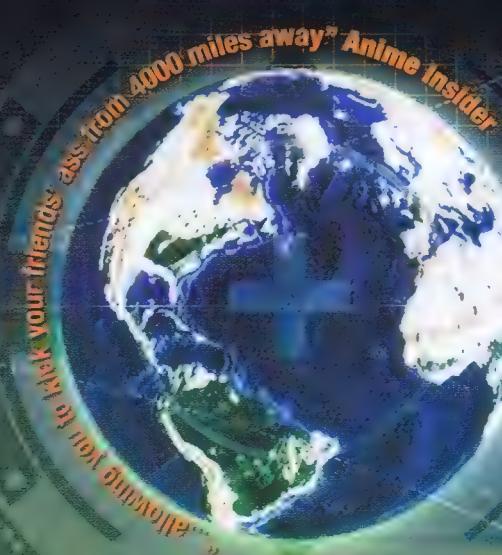
A generally excellent recreation of the game of rugby, topped off with lashings of EA veneer.

8.2 / 10

News - Issue 38
Gaming - Issue 38
Hints - Issue 40

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DEAD OR ALIVE
U L T I M A T E

SVC Chaos: SNK Vs Capcom

The 2D Battle Royale continues between Capcom and SNK.

Words: Matt Wolfs

Dev: SNK Playmore	Pub: SNK
Players 1-2	Live: Yes
Release: Out Now	
www.snkplaymore.co.jp	

SVC CHAOS: SNK Vs Capcom has the dubious honour of being the game most confused with *Capcom Vs SNK*. The difference of course being that SVC comes from SNK Playmore, while *Capcom Vs SNK* comes from Capcom. The idea is still the same, though - a group of characters from the SNK stable comes together with a collection of Capcom of characters for something of a slugfest.

SVC is the first of what will be many in a number of Neo Geo fighting games that will find their way on to our big black box of gaming. It features 24 selectable characters, as well as an extra 12 bosses, from a variety of games such as *Street Fighter*, *Darkstalkers*, *Samurai Showdown*, *King of Fighters* and *Metal Slug*. SVC plays a whole lot like a *King of Fighters* title with an added touch of *Street Fighter* thrown in. Those of you who are unfamiliar with the SNK style of fighters may find the four-button configuration to be off-putting at first, but stick with it; it's a much more advanced and versatile system to use.

The gameplay isn't a whole lot different to what's found in either the *King of Fighters* or *Street Fighter* series. This is interesting considering *Capcom vs SNK 2* had a whopping six different gameplay 'grooves' to select from. No such complication here - both camps are amply catered for. All of the bread and butter combos from *King*

of Fighters and *Street Fighter* have been implemented and blended together with ease. *Street Fighter*-style dashes are in, as are SNK's standard line-up of incredibly hard-to-beat (and cheap) bosses.

However, the game is seriously flawed. Collision detection, or the lack of it, is a source of immense frustration. Punches and kicks often don't connect when they appear to. Add to that a serious dearth of character balance and you've got a game that is neither as good as *Street Fighter* nor *King of Fighters*. It's a decent enough for beat 'em up for the asking price, but why settle for this when you can just pick up the mercurial *Street Fighter Anniversary* and wait for the *King of Fighters 02/03* pack for XBL play? □

Bonus info



MIRROR IMAGE

SNK and Capcom's franchises have characters that virtually mirror each other. Just look at Mai Shiranui and Chun Li!



↑ She shoots fireballs, she shoots air. Someone please decide!



↑ "Here, let me scratch that. With my elbow!"



↑ "No! My face! My beautiful face!"



↑ None of the trademark specials have changed.



↑ Vampire Hunter Vs Samurai Showdown.



↑ You'll know if you've pulled off a special attack when you see fancy pyrotechnics like this.

The Summary

SVC CHAOS THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

- 1 The game moves and animates rather well given that it's ported from 16 year old arcade hardware.
- 2 Online play and budget pricing are huge bonuses for buying this game, assuming you can find anyone to play against.
- 3 The mechanics are technical and tough. For those of you wanting a challenge, step up to the plate. Shin Mr Karate owns you.
- 4 Collision detection is ropey at the best of times, and irritable character imbalances will frustrate greatly.
- 5 Like all fighting games, this one is best played with a friend. The CPU eventually becomes very predictable.

The Verdict

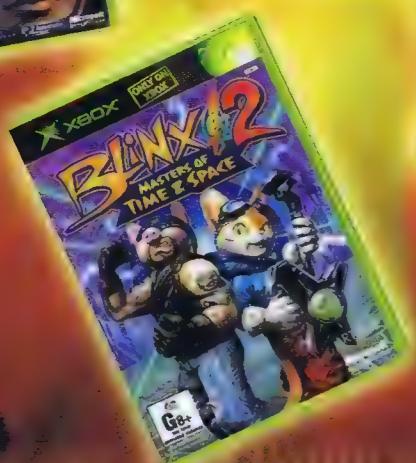
An above-average 2D brawler, being good at what it does, yet still not a patch on the best from SNK or Capcom.

PEEJ: U.S.A. + We feel lucky this game's even being released!
COMING SOON: Hints & cheats

7.0 / 10

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LIVE

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Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone

Wizard's hat of Patronising +10... it's a Dungeons & Dragons game!

Words: Ben Talbot

Dev: Stormfront Studios	Pub: Atari
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: February 2005	
www.atari.com/demonstone	

FORGOTTEN REALMS: *Demon Stone* is a game that can boast a pretty rich fantasy pedigree. Developer Stormfront has taken the relentless hack 'n' slash action of its previous adventure, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (Issue 22, 9.1), and plunged it into the D&D universe. It's a move that makes perfect sense, especially when spiced up with R.A. Salvatore's popular drow ranger Drizzt amongst other well-known characters.

It comes as no surprise that the control system is identical to *ROTK*'s. There are two attack buttons, one for specials and another to block - refreshingly uncomplicated. Also, the levels follow the same linear pattern with invisible walls keeping you hemmed in on the path to glory.

Being able to switch between three controllable heroes on the fly is a major enhancement, though. Rannek the fighter carves up enemies first and asks questions later, while Illus the sorcerer uses ranged spells because he's so weak and frail. The real badass of the group though is the half-drow vixen, Zhai. Her stealth ability means that passing through a veil of shadows makes you temporarily invisible and able to perform stealth kills.

Although the characters' abilities are obviously specifically tailored for certain setpieces, the great thing about *Demon Stone* is that it rarely forces you to do things the 'right' way. If you want to make things tougher and batter an orc to death with your spindly spell caster, you can. Likewise, Zhai's stealth can get you through entire sections unnoticed but you can still scrap instead if you've got a bit of a thirst for blood.

Perhaps just because of the fantasy setting, the usual range of RPG-style character upgrades have been included. The armour enchantments, new attacks and abilities are all fairly self-explanatory and the menus are nice and simple to run through. If you hate stats though, and once shaved off your beard to prove it, you will be pleased to hear that an auto-upgrade option is there to let you skip it.

Hack 'n' slash games have a deserved reputation for being repetitive but *Demon Stone* escapes this trap for two reasons. Firstly, there's plenty of variety in the mission objectives, from rescuing trembling villagers to defending a Helm's Deep-style battlement from ice trolls. The second and more obvious reason is that the game is only around six hours long, barely giving you time to grow bored.

When all three characters are jammed onto the same screen it defies logic that there's no multiplayer co-operative mode. This could have added some serious replay value to *Demon Stone* and is sorely missed.



↑ Once all three heroes' special bars are full, you can unleash a devastating team attack.



↑ The orc king becomes invulnerable at times.



↑ This wyvern isn't as tough as he looks.



↑ Drizzt is a fave amongst FR fans.



↑ Beware the great red dragon.

The Summary

FORGOTTEN REALMS: DEMON STONE THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

1 The controls are simple but work a treat. Changing between heroes on the fly is extremely intuitive.

2 Despite having likeable characters, the plot is rather lacklustre considering D&D veteran Salvatore helped write it.

3 A decent variety of different mission objectives although there are no rewards for doing them faster or better and therefore no replay value.

4 Graphically, this has a lot of bite. The backgrounds are beautifully detailed although the heroes look a little scrappy at times.

5 Too short by a long way and missing that all-important multiplayer mode for replay value. No unlockables either.

The Verdict

A mini-adventure. Just as the combat starts to get tough and involving, the game ends. Very enjoyable while it lasts.

7.3 / 10

ONE USE: Getting on the wrong fairground ride
COMING SOON: Disappearing behind a rock like Dungeon Master

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The best of Xbox games that scored 8.5 and more!



AMPED 2
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Stunning graphics. Dead easy to pick up and play but furiously addictive"
SCORE 8.9



COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: Driving
"Rallying at its grandest, prettiest and most absorbing. The best rally game ever made"
SCORE 9.1



BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE
REVIEWED: Issue 08
TYPE: Action RPG
"Absorbing RPG with a healthy dose of hack 'n' slashing"
SCORE 8.5



CRIMSON SKIES
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: Action
"A great package that's been playtested to death - and it looks gorgeous"
SCORE 8.9



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
REVIEWED: Issue 25
TYPE: Adventure
"Diverse and delicious. This isn't about violence, but about story, subterfuge and character"
SCORE 8.9



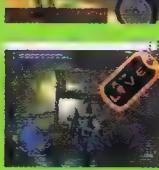
BLINX: THE TIME SWEOPER
REVIEWED: Issue 08
TYPE: Platformer
"Takes platform gaming into uncharted territory. Essential"
SCORE 9.2



BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Adventure
"A detective game that will stick with you after you've finished"
SCORE 9.0



BRUTE FORCE
REVIEWED: Issue 15
TYPE: Squad-based shooter
"Multiplayer elevates Brute Force from a good to a potentially great game"
SCORE 9.4



BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT
REVIEWED: Issue 16
TYPE: Driving
"A classic arcade racer that makes you sweat and grin"
SCORE 8.9



DOOM 3
REVIEWED: Issue 38
TYPE: Shooter
"Scary stuff and a solid shooter to boot. Will be formulaic for the veterans"
SCORE 9.2



FIFA FOOTBALL 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Sports
"Incredible player models, fluid animation, ridiculously pretty. The best Xbox footy title"
SCORE 8.7



FIGHT NIGHT 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 27
TYPE: Sports
"Absorbing, sweat-drenched title. Dazzling graphics and a groundbreaking control system"
SCORE 8.6



CHAMP MANAGER: SEASON 01/02
REVIEWED: Issue 02
TYPE: Sports
"Easily the best game of its kind... indefinite lifespan"
SCORE 8.8



FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR
REVIEWED: Issue 28
TYPE: Strategy
"Fantastic strategy. Captures the visceral atmosphere of war"
SCORE 8.9



KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: THE CRUSADERS
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Strategy
"Bloody and beautiful, with a superb atmosphere"
SCORE 8.9



X-MEN LEGENDS
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Action RPG
"A welcome blend of fighting and role-play for the comic book series"
SCORE 8.5



DEATHROW
REVIEWED: Issue 06
TYPE: Future sports
"A tragically under-marketed sports game that's perfect for Speedball fans of old"
SCORE 9.3



GRAND THEFT AUTO DOUBLE PACK
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Driving
"PS2 port, but a benchmark of crime titles yet to be beaten"
SCORE 9.3



HALO
REVIEWED: Issue 01
TYPE: FPS
"Quite simply, a masterpiece and without question one of the best games ever made"
SCORE 9.7



BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER
REVIEWED: Issue 04
TYPE: Action adventure
"A brilliant use of the Buffy license for a beat 'em up"
SCORE 8.9



INDYCAR SERIES
REVIEWED: Issue 18
TYPE: Driving
"You won't find a better racing sim on Xbox. Very technically demanding"
SCORE 8.6



JET SET RADIO FUTURE
REVIEWED: Issue 01
TYPE: Platformer/Extreme sports
"Supremely playable and very stylish. Huge, intricate levels"
SCORE 8.9



YAGER
REVIEWED: Issue 12
TYPE: Flight Sim
"Futuristic flight sim with some decent dogfighting action thrown in. Solid"
SCORE 8.6



MADDEN NFL 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: US sports
"Stunning rendition no Gridiron fan should underestimate. Looks and sounds real"
SCORE 9.3



MADDEN NFL 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Sports
"The best Madden game ever. No joke. NFL fans will be thoroughly satisfied"
SCORE 9.3



NINJA GAIDEN
REVIEWED: Issue 27
TYPE: Action
"Groundbreaking beat 'em up of the highest calibre. A must for anyone who can hold a pad"
SCORE 9.5



ODDWORLD: STRANGER'S WRATH
REVIEWED: Issue 38
TYPE: Action Shooter
"A charming shooter that makes you think literally"
SCORE 8.7



PANZER DRAGOON ORTA
REVIEWED: Issue 13
TYPE: Action/Shooter
"Cutting-edge looks and classic blasting. Gorgeous"
SCORE 9.0



CAPCOM VS SNK 2 EO
REVIEWED: Issue 13
TYPE: Fighting
"The best 2D fighter you'll find on Xbox"
SCORE 9.0



STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Shoot 'em up
"This is a game no Star Wars fan can afford to miss"
SCORE 8.7



TOP 5... Tom Clancy Games

Who said that words would never hurt you?



TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL
Sam Fisher's first outing on Xbox got the stealth ball rolling and the franchise snowballed in popularity.
Issue 08, SCORE 9.7



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3
Ding Chavez and co made their first jump from the PC to Xbox and took graphics and team play to new levels.
Issue 22, SCORE 9.3



TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON
Near-future team combat in the great outdoors became one of the most popular pastimes on Xbox Live.
Issue 09, SCORE 8.3



GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER
The sequel was essentially an add-on pack set in Cuba and the hardcore military sim picked up where it left off.
Issue 21, SCORE 8.5



RAINBOW SIX 3: BLACK ARROW
There was a pot of gold at the end of Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3 and it was this superb sequel.
Issue 31, SCORE 9.0



PHANTOM CRASH
REVIEWED: Issue 09
TYPE: Mech shooter
"Extremely enjoyable. Frantic action backed up with an impressive career mode"
SCORE 8.6



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME
REVIEWED: Issue 25
TYPE: Adventure
"The Prince is the new King of platformers. Truly outstanding"
SCORE 9.4



PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: Driving
"Gorgeous and ace to play. The definitive driving experience"
SCORE 9.3



NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Racer
"Fast and furious - a great underground racer"
SCORE 8.9



RALLISPORT CHALL 2
REVIEWED: Issue 28
TYPE: Driving
"Edge-of-your-seat racer. Looks and plays great, with brilliant Xbox Live multiplayer"
SCORE 9.2



SPLINTER CELL
REVIEWED: Issue 08
TYPE: Action-adventure
"The original and the best. Marks an exciting new direction in stealth gaming"
SCORE 9.7



FABLE
REVIEWED: Issue 32
TYPE: RPG
"Incredibly deep. Demands to be replayed several times over. Utterly gorgeous"
SCORE 9.7



RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN
REVIEWED: Issue 15
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Superb single-player; outstanding on Xbox Live"
SCORE 9.2



ROCKY
REVIEWED: Issue 09
TYPE: Sports
"Brilliantly evocative, this is dramatic multiplayer scrapping at its finest"
SCORE 9.0



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Sports
"Drives the perfect line between sim and arcade fun"
SCORE 8.7



BURNOUT 3
REVIEWED: Issue 32
TYPE: Driving
"Arcade racing has never been so incredibly and dangerously fun. Must-have material"
SCORE 9.2



FIGHT NIGHT 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 27
TYPE: Sports
"Fluid, fast and extremely fun to play. A much needed booster shot for the genre"
SCORE 8.6



SOUL CALIBUR II
REVIEWED: Issue 19
TYPE: Beat 'em up
"The most fluid fighter ever. Easy to pick up, tough to master, graphically superb"
SCORE 9.4



SPIDER-MAN
REVIEWED: Issue 03
TYPE: Action
Huge environment to explore - you'll be smashing and swinging in no time"
SCORE 8.8



SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW
REVIEWED: Issue 25
TYPE: Action adventure
"Enhances everything that was good about the original"
SCORE 9.4



STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
REVIEWED: Issue 20
TYPE: RPG
"One of the most compelling games on any console ever"
SCORE 9.5



NBA 2K3
REVIEWED: Issue 14
TYPE: Sports
"A solid basketball game with all the fundamentals. Great presentation, too"
SCORE 9.0



SUDEKI
REVIEWED: Issue 31
TYPE: RPG
"One of the best-looking games on Xbox. A brilliant, vibrant adventure romp with great AI"
SCORE 8.7



THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: EFB
REVIEWED: Issue 29
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Intuitive controls. Stylish, atmospheric and violent"
SCORE 9.1



OUTRUN 2
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Racing
"Top-notch racer with brilliant controls. Perfect for fans new and old"
SCORE 8.5



TLoTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: Action
"Recreates the film beautifully. A blockbuster action game"
SCORE 9.1



THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS
REVIEWED: Issue 29
TYPE: Stealth
"Captivating, atmospheric, with massive replayability"
SCORE 8.6



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2003
REVIEWED: Issue 11
TYPE: Sports
"Great swing system. Loads of modes. Fantastic courses"
SCORE 8.5



TIMESPLITTERS 2
REVIEWED: Issue 09
TYPE: First-person shooter
"The most complete FPS package on Xbox. Rife with features. Just buy it"
SCORE 9.3



V8 SUPERCARS 2
REVIEWED: Issue 27
TYPE: Racing
"The most realistic, detailed racer ever. Gorgeous graphics, incredible variety and handling"
SCORE 9.5



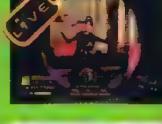
NFL 2K3
REVIEWED: Issue 14
TYPE: Sports
"A great game, but possibly too much of a challenge for the novices"
SCORE 9.2



TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: Squad-based shooter
"Atmospheric with online play"
SCORE 8.5



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: First-person shooter
"The ultimate package for fans of realism-based FPSs"
SCORE 9.3



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3: BLACK ARROW
REVIEWED: Issue 31
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Looks ace and only \$50!"
SCORE 9.0



CONFlict VIETNAM
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Squad shooter
"Bigger and tougher than Desert Storm. Fans of the genre will love it"
SCORE 8.5



TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Refreshingly different and diverse. Hop off and explore!"
SCORE 8.8



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4
REVIEWED: Issue 09
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Silky trick system. Absolutely tons to do, and then some"
SCORE 9.0



TOP SPIN
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: Sports
"Incredible detail. Hands down this is the best tennis game in the world"
SCORE 9.0



UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP
REVIEWED: Issue 10
TYPE: First-person shooter
"This sets a new standard for multiplayer shooters"
SCORE 9.2



WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED FEAT. SHAUN MURRAY
REVIEWED: Issue 17
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Outrageous arcade action"
SCORE 8.6



WORLD CHAMP. SNOOKER 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 31
TYPE: Sports
"Tension-filled fun for anyone remotely interested in snooker"
SCORE 8.8



XIII
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Unique, stylish and captivating. You can't afford to miss this superb FPS"
SCORE 8.6



COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 3
TYPE: Racing
"A perfect blend of arcade and simulation racing"
SCORE 8.5



HALO 2
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Style and substance in equal measure. An absolutely flawless game!"
SCORE 10.0



PRINCE OF PERSIA 2: WARRIOR WITHIN
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: Adventure
"Platforming gold. As good as the original."
SCORE 9.4

Full interactive Reviews Directory

The ultimate guide to Xbox games...
We've slipped it onto our disc



If you forget what any of the different colours mean, press the Y button to bring up a handy help menu.

The bottom bar indicates the game type, the issue the review appeared and the review score out of ten.

A game highlighted in orange is Xbox Live-enabled. A game in bright green is an Xbox Elite title.

The scroll bar indicates how far down the list you are. You can progress one game at a time with the D-pad.

REVIEW DIRECTORY

Press **Y** for help.

Bike racing - Issue 17 - 9.4/10	
MTV MUSIC GEN 1	
Lessened for anyone who's not a fan of heading at Ministry	
Music - Issue 30 - 8.5/10	
MTX MOTOTRAX	
sense of speed	
MX SUPERFLY	
Much better than MX2002 but far from being a classic biking game	
Bike racing - Issue 13 - 6.5/10	
MX UNLEASHED	
A very solid and enjoyable if unspectacular racer. Boasts that 'one more go' factor	

10-minute Masterclass

Play ten of the most popular custom Halo 2 games

NEW CUSTOM game types for *Halo 2* are popping up all the time. Are you confused when someone suggests a game of Zombies or Ghostbusters? To avoid looking like a *Halo 2* duncie, read our guide to the most popular game modes, created by some of the best players at www.bungie.net's forum.

Some of these games have been around for months, some are newer, and we've thrown in a few that the OXM team have created and played to death. If you've created an awesome custom game, email a description to staff@oxm.com.au - you could see it in a future 10-minute masterclass!



TRUE SNIPERS Vicious and cruel; only for Slayer sharpshooters. Turn off the time limit, shields, motion sensor and power-ups. Ensure the vehicles are gone and the weapons set is switched to snipers. Sniper rifle, beam rifle and carbine only.



TEXAS HOLD 'EM A King of the Hill variant. Three-minute time limit with motion sensor and active camo on. Switch on Uncontested Hill as well as the team time multiplier. Shotguns as both the starting weapon and map weapons set.



DEMOLITION DERBY Being a skilful driver is key to winning this King of the Hill variant. Primary and secondary vehicles set to warthog and gauss warthog. Three-minute time limit and a 30-second betrayal penalty to stop you killing your pals.



BRUTEBALL Shields off, toughness with ball on. Respawn set to three seconds; time limit two minutes. Primary and secondary weapons are brute shot and brute plasma. Map weapons turned off so you have to kill a foe to get more ammo.



PISTOLS AT DAWN This is a Blood Gulch Slayer with 16 players. No shields, no motion sensor, active camo or overshield. First to 100 kills wins - simple! No time limit, no weapons on map. Grenades and vehicles are allowed.



ZOMBIES A Team Slayer game. One player (the 'zombie') is alone on the red team and can only use a plasma sword. The blue team can only use shotguns. Blue players who die must switch teams to be a zombie. Last blue player alive wins.



CHILLI TAG This is a Juggernaut game type where each player has only three lives. It's a last man standing affair, so turn the time limit off and switch the primary and secondary weapons to magnum and shotgun. Motion sensor should also be switched off.



SILENT HILL Scary King of the Hill game type. Everyone has active camo and no motion sensor. Sword and sniper rifle as primary and secondary weapon. Weapon respawn set to double. Best in one of the bigger maps with 16 players.



GHOSTBUSTERS Another Juggernaut variant. Motion sensor and active camo both on. Grenades and vehicles both off. Juggernaut damage resistance also on. Sentinel beam as primary weapon with no other weapons on the map.



FIGHT CLUB A King of the Hill game. Two players at a time enter the hill and must kill each other with melee attacks. Winner stays in the hill and another player enters. Shields off, weapons set to plasma pistol. No shooting or grenades.

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Battlestations Midway
Star Wars Episode III
Brothers In Arms: Road to Hill 30

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GHOST RECON 2
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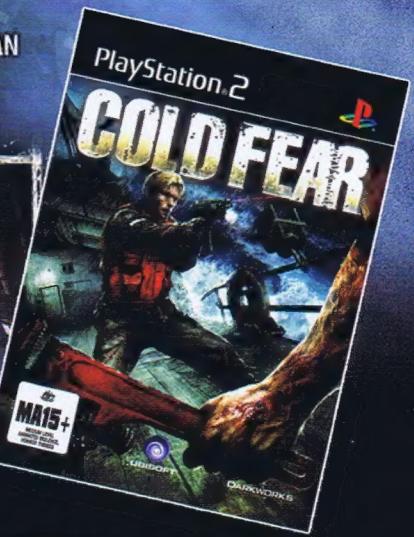
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